

(COMIC.)

THE

NUGGET

LIBRARY



Entered According to Act of Congress, in the Year 1890, by Street & Smith, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.
Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, August 28, 1890. Issued Weekly. Subscription Price, \$2.50 Per Year.

AUGUST 28, 1890.

No. 56.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers.

NEW YORK.

31 Rose St., N. Y. P. O. Box 2734.

5 Cents.

MATCH AS A FAKIR;

Or, The Pumpkinville County Fair.

By NED St. MEYER.



PULLED THE CORD, AND IN A FEW SECONDS SIX CATS WERE ON THE RAM

AFTER FOUR OR FIVE DOZEN RATS AND MICE.

MATCH AS A FAKIR;

OR,
The Pumpkinville County Fair.

By NED St. MEYER,

Author of "Match; or, The Golden Wedding at Turkey Hollow.

CHAPTER I.

SINGING JIM THE FAKIR.

After my exploits at the golden wedding at Turkey Hollow, I concluded that the neighborhood was not as healthful as it might be, and I immediately made tracks for other parts, feeling that something would turn up in my favor soon.

Something did turn up in less than five minutes.

That something was a short, fat man, who came plodding along the road, singing to himself in a I'm-rather-rusty-but-I-get-there-just-the-same tone of voice.

When he came to me he stopped short.

"Hello!" he exclaimed.

"Same to you," I returned.

"What are you doing there?" he went on.

"Nothing."

"Hard work?"

"I guess I'll manage to pull through," I replied. "Who are you?"

"Well, I might be the Czar of Russia, or the Emperor of Hoken, but I ain't," he continued. "Where did you spring from?"

"Well, I might have germinated in the desert of Sahara, or on the icy plains of Lapland, but I never did," I warbled.

He looked at me sharply.

"Young man, you are a fellow after my own heart."

"Sir, you are mistaken. I'm not after anybody's heart. I've got one of my own, and don't require two."

"I mean you're a man of my own sort."

I sized him up. He wasn't much over four feet and a half high.

"Do you think we fit in the same box?" I asked, rising, and showing my six feet of length.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "Stop! don't go up any farther. I've got a cramp in the back of my neck now looking up to you. Reckon you're a Pole."

Then I gave in, and grasped his hand warmly.

"We'll make a team," I said. "For in us people can see the long and the short of it. I am Matchmore Montrose, of New York city, at present a wanderer upon the face of the globe, free and easy, with cares as light as my purse, and ready for anything."

"Good!" he shouted; and then burst out singing again.

"Do you get 'em often?" I asked.

"Get what often?" he queried.

"These streaks of singing chestnuts."

"Chestnuts!" he declared. "They are all original. My name is James Montgomery Windbag, but loving friends call me Singing Jim the Fakir, on account of the numerous extemporaneous songs which I compose and sing. If you don't believe I can do it just listen to this:

" 'Twas on a starry, moonlight night,
And on a country road;
I met a chap so very bright,
And one I never knowed.
He sat upon a little rock,
And as I drew so near,
He sighed——"

"And sighed, and thunk his thought,

I wish a club was near!"

I finished. "Cork the rest up for future use, Jim. Have a rock and make yourself at home."

He squatted.

"Whither bound, Match?"

"Dunno, Jim."

"Care?"

"Not a red! Where are you going?"

"Same place."

"Travel together?"

"Just as you like, Match."

"Any money?"

"Fipence. How do you stand?"

"Just ditto."

"Good. Equality is the basis of contentment! From henceforth we are partners."

"What's your profession, Jim?"

"Gentleman. What's yours, Match?"

"Knowledge Dispenser and Care-Taker of the Unsophisticated."

"Phew! How do you live?"

"By eating, Jim. Don't ask such foolish questions."

"Well, you'll do. I've been up and down this continent twenty years looking for just such a chap as you. Where do we hie ourselves to-night?"

"Anywhere," I answered. "Come, let us meander onward, and while we go we'll swap yarns."

He agreed, and in a moment we were off in the direction of the Turkey Hollow milk depot.

Jim was a character. Short, fat, round-faced, bow-legged, with immense red sideboards, and hair of the color of a dying sun.

In the course of time the milk depot burst upon our vision.

It was dark and deserted.

"Come along inside," said Jim. "We will find a comfortable place to snooze, and may be early in the morning catch a freight to get to the next place on. I've finished up Turkey Hollow, trying to sell my Patent Lightning Fire Extinguisher. Only sold one bottle, and the man who bought that wanted to see if it would work as I said, so as he could get half a dozen bottles, and of course I had to clear right out.

"Why, won't it work?"

"Certainly it will work. I never saw water, colored or plain, that wouldn't put out a fire if it was poured on right. But people expect too much in this world for their money."

And Jim heaved a sigh.

"Well, I'm not going to take a freight," I put in. "When I travel, I travel in first-class style."

"Not on fipence, though. I can bluff a woman into buying ten-cent rings for solid rolled gold at two dollars each, but a ticket-clipper was always too many for me, for

"He steps right up and demands your fare ;

If you haven't got a ticket he gives you a stare;

And grabs you by the collar, the ear or the hair,

And hoists you out the car, nine miles from nowhere!"

"Nonsense, Jim! Just leave the traveling management of this combination to me, and we'll go where we please and when we please without the slightest trouble. I would hunt up a hotel, but I'm a-wearied and can't perambulate another step, so the depot must be our erstwhile abiding-place."

On the depot platform stood several dozen cans of milk, ready for shipment. Feeling dry, I opened one of the cans, and helped Jim and myself liberally to the fresh lacteal fluid.

While Jim was allowing his third cupful to gurgle gently downward, I heard footsteps, and in a second a big, square-jawed countryman, with a smoky lantern in his hand, bore down on us.

"Hay, yeou! What du yeou mean by stealin' my milk," he yelled. "Darn ef I hain't got a notion of warmin' yer hide!"

And he raised a big and dangerous-looking raw-hide.

I looked at him coolly.

"Ha! here you are!" I exclaimed. "I've been waiting for you quite some time."

He lowered the whip in surprise.

"Been waitin' fer me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir." I glanced closely at the can, and by the rays of the lantern read the name. "Your name is P. Cowbrook, I believe."

"Ye-as, Polydore Cowbrook, of Redtop Ridge. But what's that got ter du with stealin' my milk, I'd likes ter know."

"We were not stealing your milk," I returned, significantly. "Jim, that can doesn't run over twelve and one-fifth, does it?" I asked, turning to the Singing Fakir.

"Um! ah! Hard—hardly," he replied, slowly, knowing something was in the wind, but not being quite able to catch on.

"What du yeou mean? Hain't takin' a thing stealin'?" demanded Mr. Polydore Cowbrook, savagely. "I hain't goin' ter lose two or three quarts ov milk fer nuthin. I'll hev yeou before the squire!"

"If you don't take care you'll lose every drop of that milk," I replied, sternly. "And you will be the one to be brought before the squire. Do you know, sir, who we are?"

"I don't care a darn who yeou be! I hain't——"

"We are Government inspectors," I went on. "Complaints have been made that the milk coming from this district was watered. At first it was thought the watering was done on the train, but now we have proofs to the contrary. Mr. Cowbrook you are a sad swindler."

The countryman's jaw dropped about a foot. The whip fell from his hand, and under his sun-baked face I saw him actually turn pale.

As for Jim I thought he'd collapsed. He dropped to my game in an instant, and taking out a note-book and a pencil, pretended to size up the cans of milk and list them.

"Tain't no sech thing!" gasped Mr. Polydore Cowbrook, but the look on his face was a dead give-away.

"We have proofs," I continued. "We have examined each can by the lactometer, the hydrometer, the lactoscope, and the newly invented Fraudinmilk Detector, my own patent, and we find your milk very bad—in fact, nearly half water. Mr. Cowbrook, you have got yourself into a serious difficulty."

"There hain't more'n four quarts ov water in enny ov 'em," gasped the crest-fallen countryman; "an' I wouldn't hev put them in only Julianna med me du it."

"Is Julianna your wife?" I asked.

"Yes. She said city folks wouldn't know the difference."

"But you see they do. May be you would rather have your wife arrested in this case?"

"Arrested!"

"Certainly. It's a State prison offense to sell watered milk."

"Creation!"

"Yes, sir. You'll get not less than five years; perhaps fifteen."

Mr. Cowbrook gave a moan.

"Du yeou mean it?" he whined.

"Of course. That's the law."

"Fifteen years for jest fergittin' ter pour all the rinsin' water eouter the cans when yeou wash 'em!"

"In the eyes of the law, a fraud's a fraud. If you had put three quarts of water to every quart of milk, it wouldn't have been any worse," I replied, calmly. "Remember, this milk doesn't go."

"What'll Julianna say?" howled Mr. Cowbrook, in dire misery.

"Think, rather, what your neighbors will say," put in Jim—"you so respected."

"I'm a deacon, too!" moaned Mr. Cowbrook. "Say, can't yeou leave me go this time? I'll promise ter never put water in agin."

I shook my head.

"I've got a big family ter take care of," he went on, pleadingly. "Wife, step-mother, six boys, and seven gurls. Can't yeou drap it, jest this onct?"

"No; it wouldn't be proper," I replied, firmly. "Besides, see what an expense I and my man have been put to."

"I'll pay all yer expenses," put in Mr. Cowbrook, eagerly.

"And the loss of our time," I went on. "We don't do this kind of work for nothing. The Government pays us for every case we discover."

"How much air yeou goin' ter make eouter this case?" he asked, feebly.

"I get ten dollars; my man gets five."

"Fifteen dollars! Bustin' gall-nuts! It's more'n I make eouter the milk in tew months!" he exclaimed.

"And our expenses are three dollars," I added, coolly.

"Eighteen dollars! It's a tearin' heap ov money!" He squirmed, and shook his head in dismay. "I don't see how I can, but I'll hev ter," he went on. "I'll give yeou twenty dollars to let the case slide."

Mr. Cowbrook's offer almost made Jim faint.

"Take it, Match;" he whispered. "Take it quick, before he changes his mind."

"Not much," I replied. "Just let me pilot this thing."

"Come, what du yeou say?" continued the countryman, anxiously.

"My man says it isn't enough," I answered. "He says we're running too big a risk, and he wouldn't have his character injured for the world."

"Great Scott, Match!—"

"And I agree with him," I went on, calmly. "Make it thirty dollars, and we'll forget we were here."

"Thirty dollars!" shrieked Mr. Cowbrook.

"Exactly. Not a cent less; and remember, this milk doesn't go, and hereafter what you send must be up to the standard."

"It will be, ev'ry darn drap ov it," replied the countryman.

"But thirty dollars! Can't yeou make it twenty-five?"

"No, sir; and we're not particular even about that. In fact," I continued, turning to Jim, "don't you think we had better make it for—"

"Hold on! Fer gracious sâke don't raise the amount!" howled Mr. Cowbrook. "Here's yer money. I'll pay yeou on the spot."

And trembling with fear and excitement, he drew out a rusty looking wallet, and counted out six five dollar bills, which I coolly folded and shoved into my vest-pocket.

"Remember, I don't take this money on our account," I said, impressively. "I merely do it to let you go and give you a chance to do better in the future. Understand?"

"Reckon I du," he groaned. "It's a putty dear lesson! Buz-zin yaller-jackets! thirty dollars! What'll Julianna say?"

"Julianna can thank her stars that she hasn't got to go to jail," I returned. "How far is it to the next town?"

"Ter Pum'kinville?"

"Yes."

"Ten miles."

"And when does the first train go?"

"'Bout seven o'clock. Air yeou goin' there?"

"Expect to. Why?"

"Better spy onto Jeremiah Bitterweed. His milk's worse nor mine."

"Then I shall certainly give him a visit," I answered in decided tones.

"Du," returned Mr. Cowbrook, maliciously. "He stuck me on tew everlastin'ly dried-up cows, an' I'd like ter see him catch it bad."

"Where can we stop till the train comes?" I asked.

"Thar's a house on tudder side on the track jest a ways back. Reckon yeou can git a bed at it till train time."

"What were you doing here?"

"Waitin' fer the milk train. She gits here at tew o'clock."

"But this milk—"

"Don't go, I know it." Mr. Cowbrook gave another of his dismal groans. "I'll hev ter take it home an' feed it ter the hogs, I suppose."

And he flopped down on one of the cans a perfect picture of misery and despair.

We departed.

I felt like shaking hands with myself.

As for Jim, he could only take my arm and shake his head sadly.

"Match," he murmured, "you're a wonder."

"Thanks, Jim, thanks."

"A genuine wonder, and no mistake."

"Really think so?"

"I do, Match. And, by the way, being so rich, can you lend a gentleman who is down on his luck a dollar? I only want it for three or four years."

I stopped short.

"Jim, what do you take me for?"

"Only a dollar, Match. You won't miss it."

"Yes, but Jim—"

"Oh, come. Don't be hard-hearted because you're flush," he pleaded.

"Really, Jim, I'm afraid we'll have to dissolve our partnership—"

"Don't say that, Match; make it fifty cents."

"You seem to appreciate it so little," I went on. "You ask me for a dollar—"

"Make it a quarter," Match.

"When you are entitled to exactly half of all that comes in," I finished.

And taking out the bills, I calmly divided them, and quietly slipped fifteen dollars into his hand.

It was worth the price of admission to see the show. I don't believe Jim had had so much money at one time since he had been on the road, and I found out afterward that that was thirty-two years.

"Match, I'm stumped," was all he could say. "Fifteen dollars! You take the wind clean out of me! I had a sneaking kind of an idea you might offer me two. But fifteen! Say!"

"Well?"

"Let's go into the milk inspecting business. It pays better than selling washed jewelry."

"Too tiresome," I replied. "I never like to do the same work twice. Money is no object, and besides, there are a thousand and one other fields to pluck from. We will visit them, one at a time. But now I am sleepier than ever. Let us make for the semi-occasional tavern Mr. Cowbrook mentioned, and rest in peace until train time."

CHAPTER II.

MRS. CHRISTOPHER BLUEBERRY.

On we went, Jim beguiling the weary walk with a song something like this:

"When I am rich I'll build a road,
From New York to the moon;
To make the time in sixteen days,
I'll use a big balloon.
Electric lights shall hang along
The line so folks can see,
And to the poor just twice a week
I'll give excursions free!"

Presently we reached the tavern, so called, though it looked as if it was cast in the same mold as the rest of the houses.

All was dark and lonely.

"How shall we attack the castle?" asked Jim. "Fire off a gun or smash in the door?"

"Neither," I replied. "Warble out a lullaby, something with two or three cat calls in it."

And Jim began:

"A Thomas cat on our back fence,
Who didn't have a bit of sense;
Cried out 'Me-ow! me-ow!'
I opened up the window——"

Jim didn't get any further with his song. As he reached the line referring to opening the window I heard a noise overhead, and the next instant poor Jim received about a gallon of water down the back of his neck.

"Ough! Great Cæsar!" he yelled, ducking his head, which only gave the water a better chance to travel down his spinal column. "Who turned on that waterfall?"

"I'll teach yeou two ter go off ter golden weddin's, an' leave me ter hum!" shrieked a female voice from the second-story window.

"What do I know about your blasted golden weddings!" howled Jim. "You've——"

"Oh, yeou can't tell me yeou didn't go," continued the voice above. "I know better. Yeou old mis'rable wretch!"

And before Jim could get out of the way down came another gallon of water, this time in his upturned face.

Talk about your drowned-out canaries! For five minutes Jim coughed and spluttered; and all the while he was doing it that woman kept on jawing.

"I've been a-sittin' up three mortal hours a-waitin' fer yeou, Christopher Blueberry!" she cried. "An' yeou sha'n't cum in the house till yeou apologize fer yer doin's, an' promise never ter du it agin, an' solemnly vow ter git me a new dress afore pump'-kin time! I have been sot on long enough, an' I don't propose ter stand it no longer! Ef yeou want ter make a fool of yerself galavantin' 'round ter parties an' so, an' not takin' me along yeou kin go, but yeou can't share my bed and board no longer, an' that's all there is tew it."

And bang went the window down.

I smiled quietly. Jim was so full of mad he couldn't control himself.

"Mrs. Blueberry!" called Jim. "Mrs. Blue—black—straw or rasp—berry! open that window! If you don't I'll open it for you!"

But Mrs. Blueberry evidently intended to let her spouse have plenty of time in which to meditate over what she had said.

So she made no sign.

The silence made Jim madder still.

"Won't answer, eh? Maybe she's a little deaf. Wonder if she'll notice this."

And before I knew what he was up to, he had picked up a whitewashed shell lying near a flower bed, and curved it up to the window.

Crash!

The jingle of the broken glass was followed by a shriek. The window flew up again, and Mrs. Blueberry appeared in a boiling rage.

"Yeou puddin'-headed, long-eared idjit," she screamed. "A-breakin' the winders in yer own house! Hain't yeou got no common sense left? Yeou hev been drinkin,' I know yeou hev!"

"Mrs. Blueberry——" began Jim.

"Don't yeou try to smooth it over, Christopher Blueberry! Yeou can't do it. Go in the barn and sleep!"

And bang went the window again.

"Rather discouraging, eh, Jim?" I said, by way of consolation.

"I'll get that female down if it takes all night!" he replied, savagely. "We are two belated travelers, and this tavern must grant us shelter or else take in its sign." Then he yelled out at the top of his voice; "Fire! Fire!"

Slam came the window up.

"Christopher——"

"Fire! Fire!" continued Jim. "Come down, unless you want to be all burned up!"

"Christopher——"

"The barn's started, and the kitchen will soon catch!" went on Jim. "Better save your life! Fire! Fire! Fire!"

"Christopher——"

"There! the kitchen's started! Fire! Fire! Fire! Never mind saving any stuff; save yourself! Fire! Fire!"

"Christopher——"

"Fire! Fire! Let her flicker! Fire! Fire!"

"Chris——"

"Fire! Fire!"

This was more than even Mrs. Blueberry could stand. She

disappeared from the window, and we knew she would be down in another minute.

"Told you I'd fetch her!" exclaimed Jim.

"What are you going to do now?" I asked.

"Blessed if I know," he faltered.

"Let me take the reins for a while," I went on. "Don't let her see you are wet. Here, come out near the road, quick!"

"Why, what——"

"Don't ask any questions. Here she comes! Keep mum, now, mind."

I had just finished, when Mrs. Blueberry yanked open the door and rushed out. She was clad in a blooming mother-hubbard, and carried a broom which she swung over her head as she advanced.

"I'll teach yeou ter act like a wild man," she cried.

Then she stopped short.

There was no Christopher in sight. What did it mean? She looked up and down the garden.

Presently she caught sight of the two of us near the gate, and gave a cry.

And I rushed forward.

"Where's the fire?" I exclaimed, in an almost breathless voice.

"Hay?" she asked in surprise.

"Why, we want to know where the fire is?" I went on rapidly.

"I and my friend were over to the railroad depot, and we fancied we heard some one cry fire, so we ran over here. Where is it?"

"There hain't no fire," growled Mrs. Blueberry. "It was my husband jest a foolin'."

"We saw a man scoot up the road as we came over," I continued.

"Reckon that was him."

"So he was fooling?" I asked. "It's mighty queer——"

"He was ter a golden weddin', and I jest guess he drank what he hadn't oughter," replied Mrs. Blueberry. "Wait till I ketch him!"

"It's a shame to rouse a man out of a comfortable nap," I went on. "It's bad enough to have to wait for a train where there isn't any tavern."

"No tavern," she repeated. "Why this is a tavern."

"It is?"

"Ov course, and I ken give yeou a first-class-bed fer twenty-five cents a piece."

"Then let's have it by all means," I replied. "But your husband——"

"Don't worry. He sha'n't trouble yeou no more. Like as not he'll stay away till daylight now."

"Very well; then we'll retire at once. Call us in plenty of time to catch the first train for Pumpkinville."

She agreed; and five minutes later Jim and I occupied a plain but comfortable bedroom on the first floor.

CHAPTER III.

BREAKFAST AT THE TAVERN.

The hour hand on the clock had just made two home-runs, when a pounding on the door of the tavern woke me up.

I found Jim sitting on the edge of the bed listening intently.

"I reckon it's Blueberry returning from that golden wedding," he said. "Just listen."

In a moment we heard Mrs. Blueberry's voice asking who was there.

"It's me," came the somewhat ambiguous reply.

"Then yeou can stay eout till morning," returned Mrs. Blueberry, sharply.

"Eh?" asked Christopher.

"Yeou think yer smart ter kick up monkey-shines 'round here, don't yeou, Christopher Blueberry?"

"Monkey-shines!" repeated the astonished husband. "What du yeou mean?"

"Oh, yeou know well as I du! Yeou hev been drinkin'."

"Guess yeou hev been, Sereny. Let me in."

"I sha'n't; not after yeou hev been yellin' fire, and actin' like a wild girilly."

"Sereny, air yeou crazy?"

"Yeour actions is enough ter make me so!"

"I hain't yelled fire, nor nuthin'; I just cum."

"Christopher Blueberry, yeou air a nat'ral born falsifier! Yeou was here about tew hours ago, an' yelled fire and busted in the winder, an'——an'——"

"Sereny, I jest left Obadiah Wheatfield's place not half an hour ago."

"No sech thing!"

"It is. We had terrible times thar. Oby's arrested fer as-

saultin' Joel Barleybill an' his wife, an' stealin' tew barrels ov cider, an' the Tuckertons an' Whangtowners had a fearful fight, an' sumbuddy spiled all the eatin' and put powder in the candles, and there was a terrific bust up, an' the house most went to pieces, an'—an'—"

And here Christopher had to stop for the want of breath.

Of course I knew his story was perfectly true. Hadn't I been there to set the ball rolling, and do all I could to keep her in motion?

But Mrs. Blueberry didn't believe a word of it.

"Christopher Blueberry, hev yeou lost every mite ov yer senses? That yarn is worse nor the one about the house bein' on fire, an' yeou can't stuff me with no sech truck! Jest yeou go an' sleep in the barn, along with the cattle, whar yeou belong, an' maybe ef yeou air sober in the mornin' I'll let yeou in the house, an' we'll hev it out."

"Bustin' buttercups! Sereny!" gasped Christopher. "What du yeou mean?"

"Jest what I say."

"Yes, but I—"

"I don't listen to no excuses. Yeou had no right ter go ter that golden weddin' without me, in the first place."

"Sereny, I—"

But Mrs. Blueberry would listen to no more. We heard her bang down the window, and then climb back into bed.

Then Christopher stamped and stormed around the yard for fully five minutes. But it did no good, and finally we heard him tramp off to the barn, vowing he'd get even with the old woman yet.

"The curtain will rise on the second act at 7 A. M.," remarked Jim, as he turned in again.

I was busy thinking.

In the morning I would meet Christopher. He would be likely to recognize me; and the result?

Well, it wouldn't be exactly a picnic for me, that's all

However, the morning was three hours off, so there was no use to worry just yet.

So I followed Jim back to the land where the poor forget their poverty and the rich shed off their cares.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

It was Mrs. Blueberry's knuckles on our bedroom door.

"Time fer yeou tew gentlemen ter git up!" she called. "Train will be here in half an hour."

"All right," replied Jim.

"Do yeou want breakfast? Only twenty cents a piece, an' I got nice fresh buckwheat cakes and maple sugar."

"What do you say, Match?"

"What, to having breakfast? Jim, don't be foolish. I'm always in for a meal. I was born hungry. Tell her to have a double dose for me."

Jim did so; and then we climbed into our duds as rapidly as possible.

When relating some of his experiences, Jim had told me of some false mustaches he occasionally found it paid to sell. I now asked him if he had one of the useful little articles with him.

He had, and brought it forth, a silken-brown one, that, if genuine, would have been the envy of half the dudes in the country.

I put on the mustache. The transformation in my appearance was considerable. But it didn't quite suit Jim.

"Hold up," said Jim. "I've got some coloring in my pocket. Just let me put a little on your cheeks and the end of your nose. Then we'll exchange neckties and hats, and your own mother won't know you."

I followed out his suggestion, and a moment later we ambled out into the dining-room.

The table was spread, and we fell to vigorously, in fact, in a way that made Mrs. Blueberry's smile go down like a setting sun.

"Another buckwheat cake, please," said Jim, and he tackled his fourteenth.

"Also one for me," I added, "and you might as well fill up my cup with coffee again."

Mrs. Blueberry had not noticed the change in my appearance, and I reckoned that in the moonlight and her excitement she had not noticed how I looked.

"Yeou hev remarkably good appetites," said Mrs. Blueberry, pointedly.

"We came out here to get them," I replied. "In the city I hardly eat a thing—two or three soda crackers will do me all day."

"Land sakes! yeou don't mean it?"

"Oh, yes, I do. And my friend here doesn't eat even as much as that."

"Mercy on us! He doesn't look it!"

"Oh, I've had him out in the country a week now, and he's beginning to pick up wonderfully. The country is a great place to live in."

"But no good ter keep a tavern in," replied the woman, bitterly.

"Another cake, please," put in Jim, and I followed with another cup of coffee.

She groaned as she got them.

"Ef yeou want many more yeou'll hev ter pay extra," she snapped.

"Why a breakfast is a breakfast, isn't it?" I asked, innocently.

"Yes, it is, but it ain't a dinner, an' a supper, and a lunch thrown in!" she replied, tartly.

And she waltzed out into the kitchen with a look on her face sour enough to turn a pan of milk.

"Wonder where the festive husband is?" queried Jim, as he polished off about everything that remained on the table.

He had hardly spoken before he heard Christopher enter the kitchen.

"Well, Sereny, air yeou redly ter let me in?" we heard him demand.

"No, I hain't!" snarled Mrs. Blueberry. "Yeou can't cum in till yeou can convince me yeou air in yer right mind onct more."

"Hain't I ter hev no breakfast?" pleaded Mr. Blueberry.

"A man as leaves his wife ter hum, an' goes galavantin' 'round with other wimmin, hain't titled ter no eatin'! Guess yeou had enough an' ter spare last night."

"Didn't hev a darn mouthful!" cried Christopher. "There was a young rascal ov a feller that sed he was a musicker from New York, played the dickens with all the chickens an' stuff, an' we couldn't eat a darn thing!"

"Sarves yeou right," was Mrs. Blueberry's heartless reply.

She would listen to no explanations.

"Go up stairs an' change yer clothes an' git ter work," she went on. "Dinner will be the first meal yeou'll see."

"But, Sereny—"

"Now, stop! When I say a thing I mean it. The idea ov yellin' like a wild Injun at two o'clock in the mornin' an' throwin' rocks inter the bedroom winder!"

Mr. Blueberry gave a groan.

"I tell you, Sereny it wasn't me. Yeou must hev been dreamin'," he cried, desperately.

"Dreamin'! well I jest guess I wasn't, and I hev got tew gentlemen in the dinin'-room ter prove it," replied his wife, triumphantly.

"Tew gentlemen?"

"Jest so. They was awaitin' fer a train at the depot, an' heerd yeou yell, an' they cum over ter help put the fire eout."

"They did?" gasped Christopher.

"Yes, they did, an' then I told 'em this was a tavern, an' there was no fire, an' it was only my fool ov a husband on a tear."

"Sereny!"

"An' then they concluded ter stay till this mornin', and they're jest havin' breakfast neow," concluded Mrs. Blueberry.

Christopher was dumfounded.

"I'll go in an' ask 'em!" he exclaimed.

And a second later he entered the dining-room, where I pretended to be busy finishing my breakfast.

"Good-morning, gentlemen," he began, hesitatingly.

"Good-morning," returned Jim.

I looked up from my plate.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Blueberry!" I exclaimed, cordially.

"How do yeou feel after the recent excitement?"

He stared at me.

"Eh?"

"I say how do you feel after our little turn last night?"

"Wh-what?"

"Quite an adventure," I went on. "What made yeou think your house was on fire?"

His lower jaw dropped.

"Did I say the house was on fire?" he asked, in a hollow voice.

"Did you say the house was on fire?" I repeated, in injured tones. "Really, Mr. Blueberry, this is extraordinary. Didn't my friend here and myself rush clear over from the depot to help subdue the conflagration!"

He gave one look into my innocent, straightforward face.

Then a wild, uncertain look stole into his eyes.

"That settles it!" he moaned. "Yeou air right, an' Sereny's right, an' I've got 'em bad! Fer all I know that wasn't no row at Obey's golden weddin' after all. I only got soaked, an' made the orneyest kind ov a fool eouter myself!"

And without another word he sneaked from the room.

Five minutes later we settled with Mrs. Blueberry, and schot-tished in the direction of the milk depot.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE DEPOT.

Jim felt in the best of spirits, and so did I as soon as I could take off that false mustache, which had been tickling my nose ever since I had put it on.

"Ever been to Pumpkinville, Jim?" I asked.

"No."

"Don't they have a fair there?"

"Why, so they do! The Pumpkinville County Fair opens to-morrow, and lasts three days. Of course we go, Match."

"Well, I should weep, Jim."

"We'll make a fortune. Pumpkinville is quite a town, and we can buy some stuff there to fake. The grounds are two miles out of the city, and after we have got our stuff we can go up and hire a stand, and then—"

"Wait for the good people of Pumpkinville County to walk up and buy themselves rich," I finished.

"Correct. Is it a go?"

"I'll weep again, Jim."

He grasped my hand tightly.

By this time we had reached the station. Mr. Cowbrook's milk cans were gone, and a lot of empty ones, belonging to other farmers, had taken their place.

These were being loaded on various farm wagons, and the little depot, in consequence, was quite a lively place.

Fearful of being recognized by some one who had participated in that never-to-be-forgotten golden wedding celebration, I again donned the heavy mustache.

It was a good thing I did so, for presently Dock Tuckerton, who, through me, had got into a fearful row with another man, drove up with several barrels of harvest apples.

Dock was a sight to see. His right ear was half chewed off and the nearby eye looked as if it had closed up shop for good. Court-plaster nearly covered his face, and when he opened his mouth it was easy to see that he had just lost three teeth.

Of course everybody wanted to know about how he had got into such a condition, and he related the particulars of his terrific combat with Tush Stoneduck, and how all the Tuckertons and the Whangtowners had joined in.

"Who started the fuss?" asked a lank farmer, who was listening with open mouth to the spirited yarn.

"Nobody but an eoutsider," growled Dock Tuckerton. "A measely little—no, not little, by gosh, he was tall enough, but a young chap as cum from New Yeork with Obediah. Jest wait till I ketch him. I'll tan his hide, bust my suspenders ef I don't! Why, my face was sech a plagnety bad sight last night Melissa Flatneck wouldn't go home with me."

"Whar's the chap now?" asked another interested listener, and I felt a kind of a cold shiver as he asked the question, while Jim looked at me with a knowing eye.

"Dunno. He skipped eout afore any one could lay hands on him. I had an idea he might be somewheres around this depot."

This was certainly pleasant news.

I wondered why the duse that train didn't come along.

Yet I couldn't resist the temptation for a little sport.

Dock Tuckerton's wagon was backed up close to the depot platform.

The barrels of apples were tied over with coarse bagging.

While he went off to see the station-master, my knife played a tune on the strings around the barrel tops.

Then, just as a tall farmer mounted the wagon to see how many barrels were there, I touched up the horse.

He was a spirited animal, and didn't want any fooling from any one.

He gave a snort and sprang forward.

As a consequence, the wagon swung around so far that one of the front wheels got under the body.

Then things began to tip.

The farmer went first.

He tried to save himself, but only succeeded in taking a barrel of apples along on top of him.

The other barrels tipped, too.

And apples began to pour out by the bushel.

They shot in all directions—over the platform, in between the tracks, and all around the ground, until it looked as if a cyclone had struck an apple orchard and the apple orchard had got decidedly the worst of the round.

"Dod-rot the plagnety luck!" yelled the countryman, as he tried to claw his way from under the avalanche of fruit. "Flyin' hornets! Jest look at the mess! Whoa, Jenny, whoa!"

He had just about got to his feet when Dock Tuckerton came back.

Dock gave one look.

Then he was mad clean through and to spare. "By the jumpin' beeswax, Penitent Hogg, what be yeou a-doin'?" he demanded.

"Hain't doin' nuthin'," replied Penitent.

"Hain't? What du yeou call this? Crickety thunder! look at them apples!"

"I didn't du it. I was only a-countin' the barrels—"

"Shoo! don't tell me! Thar's twenty-eight dollars ov apples gone ter waste. Yeou'll hev ter pay fer 'em."

"I won't pay fer a darn apple!" cried Penitent Hogg. "I nearly lost my life through yer skittish old bone-yard."

"Bone-yard! Jenny's the best mare in these parts!" cried

Dock, forgetting all about his apples at once, so dear was his animal to him.

"Good 'nough ter lend, ef yeou want ter break a man's neck."

"She's a thousand times better nor yeour knock-kneed, spavined, dried-up, and anxious-to-die critter!" howled Dock.

"Shoo! yeou don't know what yeou air talkin' about."

"Yes, I do, an' yeou'll pay fer them apples, too, or I'll hev yeou up ter the squire's."

"I won't pay a darn cent! Yer apples is all wormy, anyhow!"

"We'll see!" roared Dock.

Then he discovered how the strings had been cut.

"I got the evidence ag'in yeou," he went on. "Yeou measely Red Topper, I've a good mind ter teach yeou a darn big lesson!"

Now, it happened that Penitent Hogg was a friend of the Whangtowners, the mortal enemies of the Tuckertons.

"Thar hain't a Tuckerton big enough ter du it!" he shouted, while the other men at the depot left their wagons and gathered around to watch proceedings.

"Hain't, hay?"

"Not a single ornery one."

"Yeou'll see in a minute ef there hain't."

"Shoo! come on! Who's afraid?"

Just at this juncture I saw a good chance, and gently landed an apple on Dock's neck.

Of course he thought Penitent Hogg had struck him.

So he immediately proceeded to sail into his enemy.

And he did it with every inch of canvas flying.

But Penitent was not idle.

Two years before he had taken three lessons in boxing, and he was fairly aching to show what he could do.

His arms moved around like the safety balls on a stationary engine.

But Dock met him half way every time.

"Take that ter remember me by!" howled Penitent, landing one on Dock's chin.

"Frame this for yer parlor!" replied the representative of Tuckerton Corners, and he put one of Hogg's eyes into mourning.

Presently they grappled.

Then they went down.

And rolled over.

Oh, it was a busy time!

I helped it along.

Apples were cheap, and heaving them around didn't cost anything.

This excited the crowd.

Dock thought an outsider had struck him.

An outsider imagined Penitent Hogg had delivered an extra one on his ear.

In a minute things begin to get mixed.

In fourteen seconds fourteen new rows started up.

They were miscellaneous rows, too.

Plain, three-cornered, and cris-crossed, and not a one hung fire.

I enjoyed it.

"Looks like the battle of Waterloo!" whispered Jim. "Match, you're a very wicked youth. If they find you out they'll hang you."

"Then we'll view the fray from afar off," I said. "Or—hold up; I have an idea."

And taking up a good, big apple, I winged it on its way to Jenny.

It struck the skittish mare on the flank. She was not used to such treatment, and resented it instanter.

First her hind heels flew skyward about ten feet. When they came down she gave a loud snort, and the next instant plunged forward at the rate of a mile a minute.

Penitent Hogg's vehicle was in the way, but Jenny paid no attention to this fact. She gently took off a wheel and continued on her course.

The breaking of the axle startled Penitent Hogg's team, and in a moment they turned and shot out in another direction, leaving the wheel of woe behind.

The fight came to a sudden truce.

"Who started that mare?" yelled Dock Tuckerton, hurrying over to the depot platform.

"Did you address me?" I asked, calmly.

"I want ter know who started my mare?"

"For particulars, see small bills," I remarked, coolly.

"Hay?"

"Pretty fast horse," I went on. "Must be about five miles away by this time."

"She is; but ef I ketch the sucker——"

"Ought to enter her in the Pumpkinville County races."

As I uttered the words two important things happened.

The train rolled into the depot.

And the false mustache fell from my upper lip.

Dock Tuckerton gave me one look.

"I know yeou!" he yelled. "Yeour the dog-gasted city chap as turned ev'ry thing slam-bang at Oby Wheatfield's golden weddin'! Jest wait till I pulverize yeou! Yeou long-legged, long-backed, all-fried humbug!"

He made a dive for me.

But I was too nimble for him.

I had no desire to be pulverized just yet.

Besides, it was contrary to my health code to quarrel in the morning, immediately after a buckwheat-cake breakfast.

So I made a grand break for the train.

Jim followed.

Dock would have come after me, but the thought of his dumped apples and his runaway mare held him back.

He was white with rage.

To pacify him I waved him a friendly adieu from the car window.

Then we rolled out of sight.

CHAPTER V.

THE ELECTRIC CROP GROWER.

"Match?"

"Well."

"That was the greatest——"

"Now, Jim——"

"The very greatest racket I ever——"

"Drop it, Jim, I can't stand it."

"Match, you're the oddest boy I ever saw. It's a good thing there isn't more like you, for if so, the world wouldn't roll straight any more."

"Keep on, Jim, and we'll dissolve."

"Oh, come, Match, I was only fooling. You don't really mean it."

"Yes, I do."

"Mad?"

"Fearfully!"

"Then I'm sorry I spoke. It sha'n't happen again. Say."

"What do you want now?"

"Nothing."

"What did you want to speak for?"

"I was going to make you a peace offering. Have an apple?"

And Jim held out half a dozen, which he had picked up while the fight was in progress.

"Jim, you are a very thoughtful and considerate partner. I cave in, and take half of the lot," was all I could say.

And I did.

While I was munching one of the apples, Jim dumped the rest in my lap.

"Here, Match, make yourself at home," he said. "I'm going to the smoker to enjoy my pipe. Sorry I haven't got a weed to offer you."

Jim left the car, and I immediately looked around for something to keep me from falling to sleep.

Opposite to me sat an Irishman, about forty years of age, dressed in a faded suit of brown, and boots that must have weighed at least twelve pounds each. He was evidently a farmer, and I reckoned he would do as good as anything.

"It's a fine day," I remarked, by way of opening the ball.

"It is that," he replied; "a moighty foine day."

"Traveling far?"

"Pun'kinville, sor. I'm going in fer a prize on some praties I'm exhibitin'."

"Indeed! What kind?"

"A new variety, called the Home Sthock, sor. It kem from the West."

"Oh, yes, I know it very well. An old farmer, named Snowfog, a friend of mine, first brought them out."

"Indeed, sor, ye surprise me. Pfat do ye know of farmin'?"

"Why, sir, I have one of the largest farms in Iowa," I returned, in grieved tones. "It is half a mile wide by three miles long."

"Be the powers!——"

"I have seventy-eight farm hands and seven steam-mowers, reapers, and so on," I continued, getting back into that old familiar rut of mine.

"Be heavens, mon, phat a soight it must be!" he exclaimed. "Oi reckon Cornelius O'Roorey's twinty acres ain't a patch to sich an illegant sthrip o' ground as that!"

"Hardly, Mr. O'Roorey."

"Yez don't look like a farmer, sor."

"Oh, out West we do farming in a very scientific way," I replied. "You have probably heard of Lightmind's electric crop grower."

"Mebbe, sor. Oi don't remimber."

"I am a Lightmind. It was my uncle discovered the invention, and when he died he left the secret to me."

"Phat is it, sor?"

"We grow crops by electricity. We have an electric wire running to every tree and plant on the place, and grow our crop when we please."

"Great schnakes! ye don't mean it!"

"Yes, I do," I replied, earnestly. "Just look at these apples, and tell me what you think of them."

And I handed over four of the best of Dock Tuckerton's crop. Mr. O'Roorey examined them carefully.

"They are first-class Early Eggs, sor, so they are," he said.

"How long do you think it took to grow them?"

"Four or foive months, sor."

Just three weeks from the time the bud appeared until they were picked.

"Phat!"

"Quite true. Pears we grow in two weeks, peaches in the same time, and strawberries in three days.

It was a terrible dose to put out, but Mr. O'Roorey swallowed it like a little man.

"And the beauty of it is that things grown in this way never rot," I went on.

Mr. O'Roorey shook his head in wonder.

"Be th' powers! phat are we cummin' to at all, at all!" he ejaculated. "Apples in three weeks an' strawberries in three days! How about praties?"

"We can't hurry them so much," I replied. "The electricity acts differently in the ground. It goes into the size of the potato. Most of those we get are as big as your head."

"Well, well, jusht to lishten to that now!"

Mr. O'Roorey was much impressed with the wonders of the Electric Crop Grower, and for five minutes I crammed him with information not obtainable elsewhere.

"An' yez is goin' to show them apples at the fair?" he asked.

"I expect to," I replied. "The only trouble is that they must be entered to-day, and I won't hardly get time to do it."

"Oi'll do it for ye," said Mr. O'Roorey, promptly.

Of course this was what I wanted.

"I'll be much obliged if you do," I returned. "I'll give you a full description, and I'll see you again some time during the fair."

"Yis, sor."

So I got out a slip of paper and wrote out something like this: "Early Egg apples. Grown in three weeks by the use of Lightmind's Electric Crop Grower, on the Lightmind farm, Iowa."

"Can you read it, Mr. O'Roorey?" I asked, incidentally.

"Oi'm sorry to say Oi cannot, Mr. Lightmind," he replied.

So I considerably added to the notice:

"Testified to by Mr. Cornelius O'Roorey, who will willingly explain the process to any one who may apply to him."

"There, I guess that will answer!" I went on. "Here you are, Mr. O'Roorey. And let me say that if you care for the apples, after the exhibition you can have them. Remember, they never rot."

"Thank ye, sor. Oi'll put thim in the parlor on the mantel, so Oi will. An', Mr. Lightmind?"

"Well?"

"Would ye mind sellin' the saret?"

I scratched my head.

"I'll think about it, Mr. O'Roorey. I didn't intend to, but if I change my mind, I'll give you first chance."

"Do, sor; an' be the powers, Oi'll have the foinest farm in Whangtown, so Oi will!"

And Mr. Cornelius O'Roorey stowed the apples and the paper carefully away.

I expected to hear from them later.

We will soon see how my expectations were realized.

In a little while the train ran into Pumpkinville, and bidding me good-by, Mr. O'Roorey jumped from the train, and made tracks for the fair-grounds.

On the platform I met Jim.

In a few brief words I told him of my transaction with Mr. O'Roorey.

"Don't, Match, don't tell me any more!" he exclaimed. "First thing you know I'll want to express my unbounded admiration, and then you'll want to dissolve our partnership—a partnership which I have just put into poetry as follows:

"We've opened up a partnership,
And joined our wits together;
Resolved to stick through thick or thin,
And ev'ry kind of weather.
We know that things we have to sell,
Will all find ready takers,
When shown up in the matchless style
Of Match and Jim the fakirs!"

"What do you think of it, Match? Don't it strike the right chord?"

"To a T, Jim. Have it engraved on a cake of ice for future generations to languish over. But what do you intend to fake, Jim?" I asked.

"I've been thinking of putting up two or three dozens of my Royal Russian Hair Oil, and about the same amount of my Gilt Edge Japanese Handkerchief Perfume. They go pretty well at country fairs."

"Where will you get them?"

"Put them up myself. I've got the labels in my pocket; the bottles I'll get at a drug store."

"And the Russian oil?"

"Cotton seed oil, red logwood, and something to sweeten the smell. The Japanese perfume is cologne and water—principally water. A bottle of either costs, to put up, eight cents, retails at fifty cents, or three for a dollar. How does that strike you?"

"Jim, you're the greatest, most wonderful, downright humbug I ever met in my life. If I had any tears on hand I'd weep for you, really I would."

Jim's face was a study.

"Oh, take a year off and air yourself!" he growled.

"But, Jim, look at it! Fifty cents for eight cents' worth of hair plaster, or one dollar for twenty-four cents' worth of squeezed out violets. It's outrageous! I said you are a downright humbug, and I mean it. Why, you even try to humbug me. Oh, Jim!"

"Never!"

"You do."

"How?"

"By coolly and deliberately trying to make me believe you pay eight cents for something you sell for fifty. Jim, knock off seventy-five per cent. of the cost, and I'll try to believe you."

Jim collapsed.

CHAPTER VI.

NEITHER BUYING NOR SELLING.

Presently we found ourselves in front of the drug store, and Jim entered to make his purchases.

A thin-faced clerk, with a tremendous wave of hair, came to wait on him.

His manner was very officious, and he tried to convince Jim that he knew better than my partner what was wanted.

I determined to take that young man down several degrees.

I waited until Jim had got what he wanted, then I picked up a bottle of soothing sirup, and held it up.

"What's this?" I asked.

"Quietem's Soothing Sirup," he replied, in a regular I-am-monarch-of-all-I-survey tone.

"Is it good?"

"First-class."

"Did you ever try any of it?"

"Me, personally?"

"Certainly."

"Of course not," very shortly.

"How do you know it's good then?"

"It's highly recommended."

"Have you got Black's?"

"No, sir."

"Brown's?"

"No; never heard of it."

"Nor Green's?"

"No, sir."

"I hardly expected you did. Only the large, first-class drug stores have them. How much is this?"

"Thirty-five cents," savagely.

"As much as that!"

"The regular price is fifty."

"How much do you get for Black's?"

"We don't keep it," a little more savagely.

"Well, how much would you get for it if you did?"

"Confound it! I don't know."

"What's that, sir?"

"I said I didn't know."

"Oh! So this is thirty-five cents?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any other sized bottles?"

"No, sir."

"Doesn't it come in other sizes?"

"Never saw them," he growled, and I could see his hair beginning to wilt.

By this time there were seven customers, including a woman with a squawling baby, waiting for their turn.

"It's a pity," I replied, coolly. "You ought to strike for a job in some regular shop, where they keep something besides pills and distilled water."

"Do you want this sirup?" he cried, grating his teeth.

"Is it good for chills?"

"No, sir."

"Or ring-bone spaven?"

"Great Scott!"

"I thought maybe it might be good for that. Besides, I've got a soft corn on the third toe of my left foot—how would it work in a case of that kind?"

"Go to thunder!"

"Or an ingrown nail, or rheumatism, or a boil on your neck? Will it cure 'em?"

"No, it won't," he howled.

"Then I don't want it," I replied, calmly. "I'll send my big sister around in the morning, and maybe you can stick her on a bottle. She wants to get something to soothe her poodle during flea time. By-by!"

And out Jim and I gamboled.

From the drug-store Jim and I drifted down to a lumber yard, where in a quiet corner we put up the Royal Russian Hair Oil, and the Japanese Handkerchief Perfume. As Jim was an expert at the work, it did not take long.

"We ought to have some other things to sell besides these two," I said. "Got any bottles left?"

"Yes; three dozen. I bought 'em in case of necessity," he replied. "We can always thin out that cologne, you know. On the last day of the fair, anything goes."

"Just wait a minute."

Near the corner I had seen a lot of circulars advertising a certain preparation as the Queen of Insect Powders. I scooped in a number of the circulars, went to a general store where I bought ten cents' worth of Paris green and a bottle of mucilage, and then returned to Jim.

Taking the Paris green I mixed it with about two quarts of dry street dust. This I put into the empty bottles, corked them up, and covered them with labels, cut from the circulars, leaving out only the proprietor's name.

"There," I exclaimed. "There are three dozen bottles of the Queen of Insect Powders, as good a powder as any, and only costing us the sum of two and a quarter cents a bottle! Does it go, Jim?"

"Yes, Match—at fifty cents a bottle." Suppose we go and drink to the new venture."

I told Jim I never drank anything stronger than coffee, and he entered a saloon to get "a small shoulder brace."

While Jim was gone I was not idle.

Standing on the corner, a middle-aged old lady, wearing green goggles, paddled towards me.

"Good-morning, marm," I exclaimed, stepping up. "I thought I would see you somewhere along here."

"Good-morning," she returned, "you wanted to see me?"

"Yes'm; been waiting two hours to catch you."

"Two hours for me!"

"Yes'm; two hours and ten minutes, to be exact."

"What for?"

"I did it out of a favor for one of your friends. Mrs.—Mrs.—the lady lives just above you; she said she was over to your house."

"Oh, Mrs. Hoppergrass. What does she want?"

"Nothing, marm, 'cepting she wanted me to show you this," I went on humbly, and producing a bottle of Paris green and dust, I put it in her hands.

"What is it?"

"Insect powder, marm. She said she was sure you would want such a first-class article. It kills bugs, roaches, ants, and other insects, and if put on the carpet the moths pack their trunks and vacate at once. It was invented by my grandfather on my grandmother's side, to keep the pests out of President Washington's home at Mount Vernon. It has been used in the White House ever since that institution was founded, and three barrels a month are shipped to the Sandwich Islands to keep the feathered cloaks of the king from an early decay."

"Well, I declare—"

"Mrs. Hoppergrass took three bottles. Said she was going to send one to her—her—was it her daughter?"

"Yes, her daughter Malissa, as married Pliny Bonerest from Dewdrop Point. Lord knows that girl needs it! I sweep and dust every day, and turn the beds every day, and my carpets come up four times a year, and each time I sprinkle a pound of camphire under 'em."

This is better than camphor, marm. It is made from powdered terra and an arsenical pigment very difficult to manufacture."

"How much is it?"

"Fifty cents a bottle, or three bottles for a dollar. I was sure such a lady as yourself, who wants everything clean and tidy, would want some."

"Yes, but—" she began.

"Excuse me, marm; I've got to catch a train for Chicago in twenty minutes. How many bottles will you take?"

"Oh, I don't—"

"Mrs. Hoppergrass was sure you'd be sorry if you didn't take at least three."

"I don't—"

"Of course I wouldn't wait here so long for every one. But she is a friend of mine, and besides, I know it is only real clean ladies like yourself appreciate a meritorious article like this."

"Well, young man I guess that's so. Now, *my house*—"

"Shall we make it three bottles?"

"Well I guess three bottles are better than one. As I was saying, *my house*—"

"That train is due in ten minutes," I put in. "Here you are. One dollar and a half, please."

I held out the three bottles, while she drew out an old wallet from her dress and opened it.

"As I was saying, *my house is*—"

"I don't doubt it, marm, and I shall be happy to call some time and take a peep at such a tidy place if I be allowed."

"Why, certainly, young man. *My house is*— Well, I declare, if I haven't left my money home! Ain't it too bad, and you going to Chicago, too? Well, never mind, I'll borrow a bottle from Mrs. Hoppergrass, and get some from you on your next trip. She ought to give me a bottle anyhow. I lent her my best set of knives and forks when her Malissa was married, and besides, that—"

But I waited to hear no more. With my hopes smashed flat, I turned and wandered sadly away.

Although he did not know it, I calculated that that drug clerk had had a swift and full revenge.

CHAPTER VII.

JIM'S JIMJAMS.

I did not tell Jim about my little episode with the green-goggled woman.

I was afraid he would weep over my sad trial, and it always gave me an ache in my heart to see Jim weep.

Besides that, when he came back he was hardly in a condition to listen to a tale of any kind. His knees appeared to have lost much of their firmness, and his tongue seemed to fill his mouth several times over.

"Jim!" I exclaimed, sternly.

"Matchy, my boy! my dear, dear boy, I have—"

"Jim, you've been drinking."

"Match, I only floated the partnership. Floated her deep enough, so she wouldn't get stuck on—on—"

"On the bar, Jim, like you did."

"Matchy, it's your fault. Why did you make me go and drink for both of us?" he hiccupped.

"Jim, how much did you spend?"

"Not a red."

"What?"

"'Tis true, Matchy, 'tis true. I stuck the bartender on a bottle of Royal Russian Hair Oil for himself, and a bottle of Japanese Handkerchief Perfume for his best girl, and took the bill out in trade. And thus the busy wheels of industry come into contact and move each other.

"The baker, and the butcher, and the grocer,
All combine and do their very level best,
To feed the undertaker who will shortly
Box them up and lay them down to take a rest."

"Matchy, dear boy—"

"Jim, I'm ashamed of you!"

"Don't be angry with me, darling."

"But, Jim—"

"At your service, Matchy, dear fel."

"You've got 'em bad."

"Never. Can't I see you? Ain't the pavement still on the ground, and the lamp-post on the corner still standing head on top? I deny the base insinuation."

"Nevertheless, you have," I said. "I can see it in your eyes. Come along. Maybe you can walk it off."

"All right, Matchy; but I'm all right, I know I am," he replied, as he did his best to walk straight beside me.

In the window of a novelty store I had seen a number of toy snakes, some of which, when wound up, squirmed around prettily. The window also had some pictures in it, and to this place I now led Jim.

"What do you think of those pictures?" I asked, as he halted before the window.

Jim gave a look, and then his eyes caught sight of the snakes. His mouth opened, and he gave a short gasp.

"Pretty nice pictures, eh?" I said, with interest.

"Very nice, Matchy," he replied.

But he did not look at them at all. His eyes were fastened on those toy snakes, and I saw the cold sweat begin to stand out on his forehead.

"That boat is a daisy," I went on, unconsciously. "Wonder what such a picture is worth?"

"I don't know. Say, Match?"

"Well?"

"I—I'm kinder short-sighted. What—what are those things in the bottom of the window?"

As he spoke, the proprietor of the store, seeing us looking slyly set one of the snakes in motion.

"What things, Jim?"

"Those things laying in the bottom of the window."

"I don't see anything but pictures in the window," I replied, calmly.

"—N—no?"

"No. What do you think is there?"

"Noth—nothing, Matchy. Let's go," and he edged away, while his eyes took on a mighty strange look.

"I want to ask the price of that picture first," I replied. "Just wait for me; I'll be out in half a minute."

Jim agreed, and I went into the store. I saw him give the snakes another good look, and then he moved clear down to the curb-stone.

Inside of the place I bought one of the snakes for a quarter. Then I also bought a bit of elastic, which I ran up the inside of my coat-sleeve, and fastened the toy to the end in such a manner that, when let go, it would glide back out of sight.

When I rejoined Jim, I found him pale and bewildered, and so weak he could hardly walk.

"What's the matter, Jim—don't you feel well?" I remarked, kindly.

"Oh, yes, only my head—" and he paused.

"It's the drink, Jim. Come, own up."

"No, it ain't," he replied. "Let's get off to the fair-grounds. I would rather—"

But just then he caught sight of that snake wriggling over the back of my hand, and he gave a yell.

"Oh, Match!"

"Why, Jim, what's up?" I cried, in alarm.

"That thing on your hand!" he exclaimed, and he made a clutch for the wicked little toy.

Before he could reach it, I let it spring out of sight, and his hand fell to his side as if paralyzed.

"Why, Jim, what's the matter with you?"

"Noth—nothing. Only—what was that on your hand?"

"Nothing on my hand," I replied; and by this time I had the festive reptile again on deck.

"There ain't?"

"No, of course not. What would there be?"

And I held that snake up in full view.

Of course he made another dive for it.

And of course it disappeared.

He stopped short, and leaned against a post.

"Match, I ain't well," he groaned. "I ain't well a bit."

"I'm sorry, Jim. Maybe you drank something you're not used to."

"I dare say. Come to think of it, there was water in the whisky, and that never goes with me. I always prefer it straight."

"Can I do anything for you?" I went on, pretending to tie my shoe-string, but in reality winding up that snake and tying it fast to Jim's trousers leg.

"No, Match; may be I'll be all right in a minute," he replied.

But in less than a minute he was everything but all right.

He caught sight of that snake.

And the snake began to work.

It ran around his feet.

And over his shoes.

And curled itself around his right leg and then his left.

And all the while Jim kept yelling and trying to step away

from it, and imploring me to get a club, and vowing black and blue he would never touch a drop of liquor again, and in short, acted like a wild man, until I deftly secured the cause of the outbreak, and slipped it in my pocket, when he stopped, all exhausted, and sat down on an ash-box the picture of downright misery.

"Jim, what is the matter?" I implored.

He closed his eyes and threw back his head.

"Match, I've got 'em—got 'em bad," he groaned.

"Got what, Jim?"

"Snakes!"

"Oh, Jim!"

"I have!"

"It's impossible!"

"So I always thought, but I've got 'em, and the worst kind, too!"

"Jim, you're dreaming. We haven't been near a snake today."

"I know it. But I've seen a hundred of 'em since I come out of that saloon. The picture-store window was full of them; they crawled all over your hand, and just now a big one was slashing around my shoe tops!" His voice began to quiver. "I reckon my time has come to die!"

"Jim, you need a doctor."

"Do you think so?"

"I really do. Come along."

At first he demurred; said he felt better already; but I would not listen, telling him I would dissolve the partnership if he didn't come along.

So he finally consented, and I waltzed him along until I came to a house where a doctor and a chiropodist had their offices.

"I'll go in and see if the doctor is at home," I said. "Just wait outside for me."

Ringling the bell brought a sleepy boy to the door.

"Is the corn-doctor in?" I asked,

"Doctor Slicem is in, sir," replied the youth.

"Then just trot me along to him," I went on. "Tell him Congressman Snipper's son wishes to see him at once."

The title did the business. In two minutes I was reclining in an easy-chair in a private office, and Dr. Slicem entered.

"Very, very glad to meet you, Mr. Snipper," he warbled, in a fine-as-silk tone of voice. "May I ask why you have honored me?"

"It's a serious case," I replied. "A very dear friend of mine is afflicted with a strange malady. He imagines that he has what is commonly called snakes, and that these snakes grow out of a number of imaginary corns on his feet. Now if you will help me to get him over his hallucination it will be a good case for you, both financially and for reputation."

"Ah, I understand."

"Of course you will have to delude him strongly," I went on, "otherwise he will not believe he is cured. You may even have to cut him."

"Trust me," replied this corn-extractor, sweetly. "I will not let him go until he is once more in his sound mind. When will you bring him?"

"At once. He is now at a friend's around the corner. Of course I will have to leave him with you. If I remained, he might suspect some trick was being played; he is very suspicious."

"I see. Very well, just bring him in; I'll fix him," replied Dr. Slicem, and he began to get out his instruments of torture.

So I went to Jim, who looked just as bad as when I had left him.

"Come ahead, old man," I said. "The doctor says he can cure you in ten minutes."

"Cure—in ten minutes?" he ejaculated.

"Exactly. He has a patent process. But he says he won't have me in the room while he is working."

"Oh, Match, don't leave me!"

"It's only for ten minutes, Jim. I'll wait outside the door for you."

With a groan, he followed me into the house, where Dr. Slicem met him with open arms.

"Ah, my dear sir, I can soon cure you!" he cried. "Just come into my private office."

And he took him into the office, while I slipped out and then around to a back room where I could see and hear all that took place.

"I suppose, doctor, you know what's the matter with me?" groaned Jim, as he sank into a chair.

"Yes, my dear sir. You are bothered with offensive reptiles."

"I've got snakes!" cried Jim, "and I've got 'em bad."

"Exactly, sir; and they come from corns on your feet. I have heard of a number of such cases," went on the doctor, glibly, while Jim stared at him with mouth wide open. "Only last week

I operated on a gentleman's foot, removing a corn that had produced a rattlesnake five feet long."

"Great Scott!" gasped Jim, "I ain't got a blasted corn on my foot!"

"Yes, but my dear sir!" cried the astonished doctor, "your snakes—"

"Come from drinking whisky."

"You are mistaken—they come from corns; at least your—"

"Maybe what I drank was corn whisky," put in Jim.

"Now, my dear sir, don't get excited," pleaded the bewildered

doctor.

"Who ever heard of treating snakes by cutting corns?" roared

Jim. "I reckon you're a double-distilled humbug!"

"Sir!"

"That's what I said. A rattlesnake growing out of a corn!

You're the worst fraud I've struck in three years!"

This was too much for Dr. Slicem. He grew pale with anger.

"A fraud, am I?" he screamed. "You overgrown loafer! Get

out of the house, before I kick you out!"

He put his hand on Jim's arm.

In exactly one minute it looked as if a cyclone had struck that

office.

Then I skipped, and took my stand on the sidewalk in front of

the house.

A second later the front door opened and Jim shot out like a

cannon-ball, sliding down the steps on his back and hitting the

pavement with a dull thud.

"Are you cured, Jim?" I asked, running up.

"I reckon I am," he replied, meekly. "Either that or else I'm

dead."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REAPING-MACHINE AGENTS.

It was now getting on toward noon, and I suggested that we have our dinners before starting for the fair grounds.

To this, Jim, who was all but a wreck, quickly agreed.

The hotel was full of all sorts of people, most of them on the

way to the Pumpkinville County Fair. Among them were a

number of farming machinery agents, and the way they were

blowing among themselves as to what this and that machine

could do, was a caution.

I thought it was a shame to let them waste their breath on "a

desert air," so I beckoned one of them aside.

"You have reapers to sell, I believe," I began.

"Yes, sir. The Wizard Reaper; the finest machine in the mar-

ket for the money. Made of superior material, latest patent—a

perfect gem. I can sell you—"

"Never mind," I interrupted. "I wanted to mention to you

that a friend of mine from the West wants to buy—"

"Where is he?" put in the Wizard man, eagerly.

"He wants two machines, but he doesn't know what kind,

and—"

"Wizard is the only kind fit to examine," put in the agent,

hastily. "Just give me your friend's address, and I will soon fix

him up."

"I want you to understand the case before you do anything,"

I explained. "My friend is a very peculiar chap. He imagines

nearly every agent is a thief, and if you approach him openly, as

you did me, you will scare him off at once."

"Ah, I understand. I am to get acquainted, and broach the

subject gradually. Is that the racket?"

"Exactly," I replied. "I came to you because I know the

Wizard is a good machine, although I wouldn't dare venture my

opinion to my friend, because he doesn't believe I know a thing

about machines."

"Where is your friend now?"

"Just getting dressed for dinner. I'll go and get him, and

then introduce you. Let's see, what's the name?"

"Binder—William Binder."

I ambled down to where Jim was putting the finishing touches

to his toilet.

"Match, how do I look now?" he asked, as he put an extra

bit of soap on the tips of his fiery mustache.

"Regular dude, Jim; all the girls will fall in love with you

But say. I just met an old friend of mine in the parlor, and

want to introduce you."

"Who is it?"

"His name is Billy Binder. He's a splended fellow, Jim

only a little queer."

"Queer?"

"Yes. His father was an inventor of farm reapers, and died

with reapers on the brain. Billy took up the same malady, and

every once in a while he talks reapers."

"Got them bad?"

"Oh, no. Only you must humor him. If you don't he ge

violent. When he isn't on the reaper question, he's as nice a chap as you ever met.

A moment later we went to the parlor, and there I introduced Jim to the Wizard agent.

That agent was as sweet as condensed honey.

Finally Jim suggested dinner, and Mr. Binder immediately invited us to dine at his expense.

The dinner was a fine one, and after each of us had loaded up and was feeling contented with himself and the world at large, that agent began to feel his way for an order.

He talked reaper from all points of the compass, he argued, teased, coaxed, and threatened: he offered to bet a thousand dollars that his machine was the king-pin of the universe, and the only one that made agriculture profitable, and wound up by stating that it was only a natural-born idiot who would buy any other.

And Jim sat there the picture of distrust, until, when Mr. Binder button-holed him, he sprang to his feet unable to stand it any longer.

"I don't want to hear any more about your confounded reaper!" he cried. "You've nearly talked me to death!"

"Yes, but, sir, look at the superior inducements——"

"Oh, rats! You ought to be put in an asylum!" howled Jim. "My ears won't get over it for a week! You're the worst crank I ever met!"

"Yes, but——"

"Not another blasted syllable or I'll heave you out of the window! I ain't going to be talked into an early grave by a galoot whose folks are too mean to hire a cage to put him in!" stormed my partner, as he rushed for the door, and I after him.

"You're a swindler!" retorted the agent, in a rage, "a mean contemptible swindler. You don't know a reaper from a mowing machine. I'll have you arrested as a humbug!"

And he was so mad he could do nothing further but dance around and shake his fist at our retreating forms.

CHAPTER IX.

STORIES ON THE WAY.

Jim and I left the hotel and walked off toward the fair ground.

Presently I got tired of walking.

So I calmly waited until a nice farm wagon came along.

It contained a regular hayseed individual of about seventy, and his pretty daughter of seventeen.

Picking up a bit of glass, I hid it in the hollow of my hand, and then called out:

"Hello, there! Hold up!"

"What do yeou want, young man?" replied the old man, slacking up.

"Your horse is lame," I replied, stepping to the animal's side.

"What, Tom lame!" exclaimed the girl. "Oh, paw, I didn't know it!"

"Nuther'd I," replied the old farmer. "Wait till I see."

"Don't bother, I'll do it, sir," I replied, picking up one of the horse's hind feet. "Here it is—a bit of glass. He's all right now, though he wouldn't have been in a little while longer."

"A piece ov glass, hay? Wall, by jinks! I'm glad yeou seed it, 'cause I wouldn't hev Tom go lame fer a good deal."

"No, indeed, paw," put in the daughter. "Poor Tom, the old darling!"

"Gwine ter the fair grounds?" continued the old man.

I said I was.

"Hop up, then; yeou kin ride jest as well as not. There be lots ov room."

So I climbed up, and took a seat on the outside, with the pretty daughter between us.

"Much obleeged, young man," said the old man, as we drove along.

"Don't mention it," I returned. "Nice horse you've got."

"Right good," was the reply.

"The horse puts me in mind of one I owned while in Brazil," I replied. "Nero I called him. He was an exceedingly swift animal, and often we galloped over the pampas at a rate of fifteen miles an hour."

This statement opened their eyes. They had never met a man from Brazil, and looked at me as a sort of wonder.

"Well, I swan!" exclaimed the old man. "Yeou don't look like a forriner, yeou don't!"

"Oh, I'm not a foreigner. I was only there on a visit, looking up some ten or twelve thousand heads of cattle I had bought," I explained. "The natives were stealing them, and I went down to put a stop to their work."

"Du tell! Did yeou du it?"

"Certainly. Though I found it was necessary to have six of the rascals hung."

The pretty girl shivered.

"Oh, laws! Wasn't that perfectly dreadful!" she simpered.

"It had to be done," I went on. "But I've had worse things to do than that. While traveling through Italy I was once stopped by brigands, who demanded my money——"

"Did you hev much?" interrupted the old man, with interest.

"Not a great deal—twelve thousand piasters—about ten thousand dollars."

"Oh, laws!" cried the daughter. "What a sum of money!"

"To some people, but not to me," I put in, incidentally.

"But, as I was saying, these brigands demanded my money, or my life."

"Oh, laws!"

"I said I never gave up money on demand. If they had asked for it like gentlemen I would have taken into consideration that the previous winter had been a hard one, but as it was, they could not have it unless they took it out of my pocket when I was dead."

"Oh, laws!"

"Good, good!" cried the old man. "Thar's spunk, Clarissa!" he continued, to the daughter.

"Then they commenced to open fire on me. One shot pierced my coat sleeve, and another put an unnecessary air-hole in my hat."

"Oh, laws!" cried Clarissa.

And in her wonder and alarm she grabbed my arm and clung close to me.

"It was all over in five minutes," I concluded. "I drew out a brace of revolvers, and in a trice seven brigands lay dead, and I rode on unharmed."

"Oh, laws!"

"That's kinder risky business," commented the old man, with a grave shake of his head. "Darn ef I want enny briggins a-puttin' extra air holes in my hat. Did yeou feel skeery like?"

"Not a bit, sir," I replied. "I don't value my life so highly as all that."

"I had a cousin got the gold fever years ago an' went to Californy, but he never had no sech adventures as that," said the old farmer. "Reckon yeou hev been travelin' a right smart bit."

"For twenty-two years—I started when I was only four years of age"—this to Clarissa.

"What might yer name be?" went on the "paw."

"Charles Columbus, sir; and yours?"

"Mine's Elizur Medder."

"Meadow, paw," corrected the daughter.

"Wall, mebbe, Clarissa, though it was Medder when yer mar married me. So yeour name is Columbus? Enny relation ter Christopher?"

"Oh, yes, we originally stamped from the same family."

"Guess yeou an' the World's Fair kinder hook tergether then?"

"Hardly, sir. You see, Christopher's mother borrowed a bonnet once from one of my female ancestors, and didn't return it, and ever since that time there has been a coolness in the family."

"Du tell. Wall, I believe that, 'cause fifty years ago Mash Grinder an' Sid Grinder had a fallin' out about a tree as was growing atwixt thar tew medder lots. It was ter come deown, and both claimed the wood. They got to quarrelin' about it, an' finally settled it should go ter the one whose lot it fell inter. Each ov 'em was ter du half the choppin'. Wall, Mash he kinder sized the tree as leanin' ter his side, an' he chopped his part mighty quick. Wall, Sid he reckoned as how the tree did lean over ter Mash's, but he sot his mind ter hev the wood anyhow. His lot was on the east side ov the tree. Day an' day slid past an' Sid didn't du no choppin', an' Mash began ter get mad an' sed Sid was afeerd ov the consekence. But Sid sed she'd cum deown one ov those days, an' Mash needn't ter worry 'cause the wood would never be hisn. Wall, one night kem a terrible storm. It blew all-fired hard directly from the west. Mash he went eout ter see ef the roof on his barn was safe, an' he found Sid a-choppin' at that tree fer dear life. He hadn't no more'n got ter the spot when Sid guv the finishing hack, an' the rip-tearin' wind blew the tree five feet over his line. Talk about a crazy lunetic! Mash he danced around an' swore it wasn't fair, sed Sid was a dog-gasted hypercrite, an' ef he didn't roll that tree on the side it belonged he'd chuck him in the mill pond, an' the fust thing folks knew them tew men went at it an' fit so hard Sid didn't cum eouter bed fer six months after, an' Mash couldn't shet his meouth straight never no more," concluded Mr. Elizur Meadow.

"And what succeeded this pugilistic encounter?" I asked.

"What kem arfter the fight?"

"Yes."

"They were both tucken up afore the squire an' fined twenty

dollars, an' the tow sides ov the family don't so much as notice each other now."

"Bad as the Tuckertons and the Whangtowners," I put in.

"Du yeou know them folks?" exclaimed Mr. Meadow, in surprise.

"I met them at Obadiah Wheatfield's golden wedding last night," I replied.

"Du tell! What, at Oby's?"

"Yes. Do you know Mr. Wheatfield?"

"Du I know him!" cried the old man. "Lands ov Goshen! Him an' me is cousins. We was agoin' ter the celebration, only Clarissa's mar had the newralgy so bad we couldn't."

"Du tell us about the weddin', Mr. Columbus," put in Clarissa.

"I hain't never been to no celebration like that yet, an' I know they must be deownright splendid an' luvly!"

So I let out on the golden wedding.

Let out with bells on, too.

I made it out to be the grandest success the golden wedding section of celebrations had ever known, until poor, dear Clarissa began to cry because she had not gone anyhow.

And I mentioned incidentally what great friends Mr. Wheatfield and I were, how he had begged me to stay with him for a month or two, and how very, very sorry I was that business compelled me to decline the invitation.

And Mr. Elizur Meadow took it all in, and in return asked me to spend the evening and the night at his home.

At first I demurred.

I had a friend and—

Bring the friend along.

Besides I didn't want to intrude.

Then Clarissa put in her oar.

She wanted me, too.

Wanted me badly.

So I finally said I would come.

And I made up my mind to entertain that young lady in a way that she would remember as long as she lived.

CHAPTER X.

THE TWO FAT GERMANS.

We parted at the entrance to the fair grounds, I promising to meet them on the return, and then I calmly waited for Jim to drift along.

While waiting, two burly Germans—regular kegs in appearance—stumped up to me.

"Say you, vare ist dot ticket-office, ennahow?" asked one of them.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Vere ve got tickets?" put in the other keg.

"I'm sure I don't know where you got your tickets," I returned.

"No, ve vant to get tickets," explained No. 1.

"Oh, you do?"

"Yah."

"All right, you can," I replied, pleasantly.

"Vat?"

"I said you had my full permission to procure them."

"Donnervetter!" growled the first keg. "I vant ter puy dem."

"Yes, that's the best way to get 'em," I rejoined. "Stealing is cheaper, but you might get caught."

Both of them glared at me.

"I said I wanted ter puy tickets, und I wanted ter know vere I could puy dose tickets," howled No. 1.

"Oh, I understand, you want to buy tickets," I replied.

"What kind of tickets—square, oblong, or round?"

"Vat?"

"What color do you prefer, red, blue, or pink?"

"Donnervetter!"

"Have you any idea as to the design or finish?"

"Ach du leiber zeil!" howled both in concert.

"You might try the office," I suggested. "They may have a few thousand pasteboards left."

"A few thousand!" exclaimed keg No. 1.

"Maybe more. But you'll have to get measured first."

"Vy ve get measured?" asked keg the second, in astonishment.

"I don't believe they have got tickets to fit."

"Vat?"

"And even if they have, you'll have to go through the horse-gate; you'd get stuck fast in the turnstile," I went on.

Both of them shook their heads doubtfully.

At the same instant I espied an empty ticket-office near the road, with the door open.

I thought I saw a chance for a bit of fun, and so directed them to the front of this, and then quietly slipped in behind.

Inside, I put on the false mustache that was still in my pocket, and then opened the little window.

"Well, sir?" I asked, in a regular we-don't-stand-any fooling voice.

Keg No. 1 quickly explained what he wanted—two tickets for the three days of the fair.

Near by lay some cards, as well as pen and ink, probably for use by the ticket-seller in the morning.

It took me just about three seconds to write out two cards, as follows:

"This man is an escaped lunatic. Handle him with care. He can't read or write, and thinks his card an admission ticket to the world. Being stout, he often imagines he is a German, and speaks in broken English. Return him to the Scatterbrains Asylum at once.

"N. B.—His brother, also a lunatic, may be with him."

"Three dollars, please," I said, before I handed the cards over.

One of the Germans handed me an X, and I gave him change, exactly a five, two twos, and a one, which he doubled up and shoved into his pocket without counting.

Then he took up the tickets, and I skipped.

One or the other might take it into their heads to read what I had written, and then it wouldn't be safe for me in that neighborhood.

But they did not look at the cards, and, taking off the mustache, I walked over to the entrance to watch the fun.

It was not long in coming.

Of course it was no regular admission day, but yet there was a man at the turnstile to keep out improper persons.

To this man they presented the cards.

He read them over carefully.

Then he looked the Germans over carefully, and handed the cards back.

"All right," he said.

And after a terrible pile of hauling and squeezing, the two kegs passed through the turnstile.

"Petter haf dot gate made larger," said No. 1, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"Ter-morrow we ton't eat our dinners bis ve got trough," puffed the second.

Meanwhile the ticket-taker had beckoned to a policeman, and the two held an earnest conversation.

Then the policeman called up two men in citizen's clothes, whom I rightly took for detectives.

Presently the trio separated, and the two detectives ambled up to the two Germans.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Brown!" exclaimed one of them.

"My name vos Schmidt," replied keg number one. "Vat you want?"

"We have got news for you and your brother," said detective number two.

"Mine brudder?" queried Mr. Schmidt.

"Yes, sir. We've been hunting all over for you. Some one very sick at Pumpkinville wants to see you."

"See me, hay?" exclaimed Mr. Schmidt.

Then he spoke to his friend in German.

I don't know what he said, but it must have been something about confidence men.

"Vas it mine vife?" he asked, innocently.

"Yes, sir; she's very sick."

"You don't tole me. Vas mine brudder's vife mit her?"

"Yes; they want you both to come at once. We have a carriage at the gate, and can take you right down."

"I would go, but for von ding," replied Mr. Schmidt, with a twinkle in his eye.

"And that?" questioned the detective.

"You vos a schwindler; both of you vos schwindlers!"

"Sir!"

"Oh, I know you, and of you ton't go vay I have you by a policeman locked up quick!" continued Mr. Schmidt, loudly.

"Dis man is mine friend, Mr. Bauerman. I don't got no brudder, und ve ton't got no vifes already. Clear ouwt, you hum-buggers!"

The detectives were taken back. They had clearly "stepped in the mud!"

But they were not to be put off.

They were new men, and were determined to make a record for themselves.

"You come along with us, anyhow!" exclaimed number one. "We want you."

"Yes, and don't make any fuss, either," added number two.

"Go mit you!" cried Mr. Bauerman.

"Clear ouwt, you hum-buggers!" repeated Mr. Schmidt.

"You've got to go with me!" cried record-maker the first, and he took hold of Mr. Bauerman's arm, and attempted to walk him off.

At the same time Mr. Schmidt received a similar hint to go along.

Both refused to go.

It didn't take much to refuse.

They simply didn't lift their feet.

And when two elephants refuse to stir, what are you going to do about it?

"Let go dot arm!" cried Mr. Schmidt, "or I'll bust you all ter pieces!"

And he was as good as his word.

The detective didn't let go.

And suddenly Mr. Schmidt tripped him up and sat down on him.

And the detective?

Well, I could see a head sticking out at one side, and a pair of squirming feet at the other, but that was all.

Meanwhile, detective the other had gotten ahead of his prisoner by ramming his head into Mr. Bauerman's stomach, nearly causing that individual to collapse.

But a moment later the crushed detective was on his feet again; Mr. Bauerman managed to get a grip on his second wind, and then all hands sailed in for glory.

The two Germans were as mad as locked-out hornets.

They thought the detectives toughs of the first water.

And the detectives were positive that the two fat men were the luniest kind of lunatics.

"Bolice! bolice!" shrieked Mr. Schmidt. "Tiefs! murder! bolice!"

"Help! help!" cried detective the second.

And getting a good chance, he blew his whistle for assistance.

And five minutes later three policemen arrived.

Meanwhile a crowd of several hundred people had gathered.

Then the five officers of the law tried to take the two Germans to a lock-up.

Whew!

Talk of a row! Every one was positive he was right, and wouldn't listen to any one else under any consideration.

But the policemen drew their clubs and that settled it.

Clubs were trumps.

In vain Mr. Bauerman and Mr. Schmidt protested that they were honest, law-abiding citizens of Pumpkinville, but it was no use.

Both detectives swore that the Germans were insane men, and so they were hustled into a wagon, and under guard of two blue-coats, and heavily handcuffed, were driven off to the county jail.

Awful! wasn't it?

CHAPTER XI.

GHOST STORIES, AND A GHOST.

In the crowd that watched the departure of the wagon containing the two luckless prisoners, I found Jim, who was covered with dust, and all out of breath from his long walk.

"How in thunder did you get here?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Oh, I got tired of tramping, so I waited for my private coach to come along and got aboard," I replied, coolly.

"Cut it, oh—"

"Fact, Jim. Got a special invitation out to dine this evening, too."

Jim gave a far-away look.

"Oh, you needn't doubt it. You're to go, too."

I took him into my confidence, and told him all about my meeting with Mr. Elizur Meadow and his gushing daughter Clarissa.

"Dead fact, Match?"

"Hope to die—"

"Then you take the—the whole bakery, Match; you're the greatest—"

"Hold up, Jim, or I'll—"

"I forgot, Match."

In the fair grounds everybody was getting ready for the grand opening at ten o'clock on the following morning.

Then we went off and hired a small corner stand, locked our goods up in safe place, and were ready for business on the morrow.

And I determined that our business should be of the very liveliest kind.

At sundown we made our way to the gate, and found Mr. Elizur Meadow and Clarissa waiting for us.

At the last instant I couldn't resist the temptation to pile one more joke up poor Jim's back.

"Keep quiet, Jim, now until you are introduced, and listen

closely to what I say, because we don't want to get things mixed."

"All right, Match, fire away; I'm under orders."

And this is the way I introduced him:

"Mr. Meadows, this is my friend, Mr. Robert Windyman, of London. He is a splendid fellow, but unfortunately, though he can hear excellently, he was born dumb, and has never been able to speak a word in his life."

By the boots, but wasn't Jim mad?

He gave me a look that was meant to paralyze me.

He fairly ached to give me a very, very large chunk of his mind.

But he didn't dare to open his mouth.

It made the tears come to his eyes to swallow the libel and say nothing.

But it had to be done.

"Glad ter meet yeou, Mr. Windyman," said the old farmer, giving Jim's hand a shake that nearly cracked every bone in it. "Darn ef I hain't sorry yer tongue's tied fast. But yer right welcome ter come ter Apple Blossom farm, ennyhow."

And Jim had to bow, and smile, and all that, while at the same time he gave me a kick in the shins that nearly took me off my feet.

The old farmer had rigged up a second seat in his wagon, and I sat on this, with the overpowering Clarissa beside me, while Jim and Mr. Meadow occupied the front.

We were soon on the way, the old farmer talking at a lively rate to Jim, and my partner sitting as dumb as an oyster, and ever and anon giving me a look that sent a cold wave scampering through my ribs.

As for Clarissa, she was just too sweet to exist. She evidently thought she had me in full tow, and gushed over me like a Murray Hill girl over a pet spitz.

And I made myself thoroughly at home.

We reached Apple Blossom Farm, and were soon in the house, where we were introduced to Mrs. Meadow, who hustled around to get an extra fine supper for Cousin Obadiah's friends.

And I guess that supper was about the only thing in our visit that Jim enjoyed.

After the meal Jim smoked his pipe along with the old farmer, while Clarissa and her "maw" listened to more of my fairy tales.

But presently the daughter gave the mother a pretty broad hint on two being company, and the old lady retired, leaving us in the parlor alone.

At the same time I heard Jim tramp up stairs.

"Excuse me for a moment," I said, "I want to bid my friend good-night. Then I will come down again and spin you the real secret of my life."

I hurried after Jim, and found him alone in the bedroom that had been set apart for our use.

"Match, you miserable, long-backed—" he began.

"Stop, Jim, or you'll ruin everything," I put in hastily.

"I don't care a rap. Why, you blasted young heathen, my jaws are fairly aching to sing, and here I've got to sit as quiet as a clam."

"All done for a purpose, Jim."

"Purpose be hanged?" he howled.

"Very well, have your own way," I said, in injured tones, and preparing to leave.

"Yes, but Match, if this keeps on I'll get the lockjaw!" he pleaded.

"Do you want to let out so badly?"

"Yes, I do. I feel so bad I'd give a dollar to sing one verse of Shoo Fly or Captain Jenks, or any other laid-in-the-grave song."

"Then, listen, Jim, and I'll tell you how you can do it, and no one be the wiser."

And I told him.

At first he didn't approve of my plan, but I told him there was no other way, and he consented.

"But remember, Jim," I said, "it must be awfully solemn."

"Solemn as a grave-yard, Match," he replied. "And I honestly hope you will get hung for what you're going to do," he added.

"Thanks, Jim, for your kindness," I replied. "Just watch out for any stray dose of buckshot that may be traveling your way."

Then I went back to Clarissa. She had arranged a big arm-chair near the window, and had turned down the light, "to get a nicer look at the lovely full moon," as she explained.

Well, we talked of the moon and the fair and so on, and gradually I began the story of my life by asking her if she had ever seen a ghost.

"Oh, laws! no!" she cried, "an' I don't want ter, either."

"I have seen two—or rather one twice," I returned, in an intense whisper.

"Oh, laws! weren't yeou skeert?"

"No; I go off in a trance," I replied. "It is a family ghost—the ghost of an uncle, who tried to teach a church choir to keep together, and died of a broken heart. He appears singing the songs they sang at his funeral. I have a presentiment he will appear again soon."

"Oh, laws!"

"Yes; it is nearly time. He said he was coming this month at full moon."

"Oh, laws. It's full moon ter night," moaned Clarissa.

"I know it, and I— what was that?"

I hissed out the words in a low tone. Clarissa jumped about two feet.

"D-did yeou s-see anything?" she gasped.

"No, only I thought I did. Oh, how horrible it is—a ghost with long, bony hands, a shrunken, shriveled body and an icy grasp!"

"Oh, laws!"

Clarissa glanced over her shoulder, and her teeth began to chatter.

"It is frightful; enough to freeze the marrow in one's bones," I went on. "The—listen!"

As I spoke out on the clear night air rang this slow, measured song, in deep solemn tones:

"The night winds howl o'er my lonely grave,
The pale moon streams o'er the crumbled stone;
I walk the air, and nightly rave,
O'er troubles known to me alone.
And he who hears me soon must die,
To pass away like winter's snow;
Not upward to the peaceful sky,
But downward to the fires below!"

As the song ended in a low, hollow groan, a large white mass passed swiftly across the face of the open window.

"It is the ghost!" I cried, falling back in the chair.

Clarissa gave one long, wild, piercing shriek, and making for the door, she tore out, and up the stairs as if the demon of evil was at her heels.

And leaning out of the window, I picked up the bed sheet Jim had dropped, and then sneaked up to our room.

CHAPTER XII.

FUN AT APPLE BLOSSOM FARM.

I reached our bedroom just in time to prevent Jim from inflicting a second dose of the song upon the balmy midnight air.

"Well, Match, how did the warble go?" he asked. "Didn't I roll around those bass notes beautifully?"

"I'm afraid you overdid it, Jim," I replied, seriously, as I put the sheet on the bed. "The young lady went into a dead faint, and may be she will never get over it."

"Oh, Match!" Jim's jaw dropped about a foot. "Suppose we get caught."

"We'll be lynched," I replied.

"What shall we do?"

"Keep quiet and go to bed."

"Yes, but if they come up here?"

"I'll fix 'em."

Jim turned in at once; but he didn't go to sleep for fully half an hour.

Neither did I.

I expected every minute to hear Farmer Meadow tramp in and demand what it all meant.

But nobody came; and then I prepared to follow my partner into dreamland.

But suddenly an idea struck me.

On a peg in the corner hung some old clothes and an old hat. Crawling out of bed, I put the clothes on. Buttoning the coat up around my chin, I drew the hat over my eyes, and rubbed a little lamp-black on my cheeks.

Then I opened the window curtains so the moon could have full play, and stepping up beside Jim, grasped him by the shoulder.

As might be guessed, his short sleep had been a troubled one, and he awoke with a start.

The sight of a rough looking man at the bedside didn't ease his heart any, either.

His hair seemed fairly to stand on end.

"Wh-what do you want?" he gasped.

"You know well enough," I replied, in a rough, heavy voice.

"N-no I don't," he faltered. "C-can't you let a feller sleep?"

"We're going to teach you a lesson!" I went on, severely.

"You'll find it's no joke to scare a young lady into fits. Miss Meadow has three doctors tending to her, and they say she may go crazy."

"Oh, Lud!" groaned Jim. "Who—who are you?"

"I'm her cousin, the boss of the saw mill. Come, get up."

"W-what are you going to do with me?"

"Tie you fast to one of the paddles of the water-wheel till tomorrow, and then put you in the squire's hands—that is if you survive the three or four thousand duckings you'll get."

Jim gave a terrible groan.

"'Twasn't me!" he howled. "I didn't scare your cousin."

"You had a hand in it."

"I only sung a song," whined Jim. "Match arranged the whole thing. Say, Match, didn't you?"

And my partner gave the bed-clothes a jab with his arm.

But I wasn't there, and he soon discovered that fact.

"Match! Match!" he called.

"You needn't do that," I said. "We have already taken care of your companion in this dastardly crime."

"What did you do with him?" asked Jim, more alarmed than ever.

"Caught him running away, and hung him to a tree in the apple orchard," I answered in a blood-thirsty voice.

"Oh, Lud!"

And Jim's face was the picture of despair.

"Come, hurry up!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, please—" he began.

"None of that, or we'll hang you, too."

"Let me off just this once!"

"Can't do it."

"I'll pay you—"

Jim gave a moan and two groans.

He was in a big fix and no mistake.

Slowly he arose and put on his clothes.

I urged him to hurry up, and sat on the bed watching him dress.

I wanted to laugh so much that I nearly had a fit.

He begged piteously to be let go, and threw all the blame on me.

And I became extra stern, and said his body should swing on the other side of that apple tree.

That settled it for Jim.

Ducking was bad enough, but to be hung, dangling in the air—ough!

He stepped near the door.

And before I could stop him, he was outside, and hopping down the stairs six at a time.

"Jim," I called, in my natural voice. "Come back!"

Did he hear me?

Well hardly.

For by the time I had finished he was out of the house, and puffing up the road at the rate of forty miles an hour.

And that was the last seen of him at Apple Blossom farm.

Then I went to bed, and slept as calmly as only those with a perfectly clear conscience can.

When I went below in the morning I saw the gentle Clarissa in the sitting-room alone, and slid off to her at once.

"Good-morning!" I exclaimed, sweetly.

"Good-morning," she said, stiffly.

"I hope you didn't say anything about our awful experience last night," I went on, confidently.

"Yeou are a nice one ter skeer the wits eouter a buddy!" she went on, bitterly.

"Yes, but I couldn't help it," I went on. "I'm a doomed man. I've got to die, but I don't want every one to know it. Have pity on me."

"Yeou eouter keep yer ghost ter home," she sniffed. "I'm tremblin' yet!"

"I'm sorry," I replied. "Forgive me for one thing, will you?"

"Depends on what it is," she replied, trying her best to appear unconcerned, but with curiosity sticking out all over.

"It is not much, only a trifling favor."

"Well, what?"

"Forgive me for occupying my allotted portion of this terrestrial globe."

"Hay?"

"I ask your pardon for retaining possession of my section of this mundane sphere."

"Oh, laws!"

"Will you?"

"Wall, I suppose I'll hev ter," she replied, vaguely.

And I'll bet a nickle that to this day she hasn't the least idea what she promised.

When we went into breakfast every one wanted to know where Jim was.

"I'm very sorry," I replied. "But Mr. Windyman had an important engagement, and had to leave before you were up. He wished me to thank you kindly for your hospitality, and said

he would always remember his visit to this farm as the most delightful event of his life."

This tickled all hands immensely.

I will slide over the breakfast, which was bang up. Of course I couldn't resist having a little fun during the half hour spent at the table, and I did not intend to let the brilliancy of my idea become rusted for the want of use.

But all such things must have an end, and, finally thanking them for their kindness, and promising to come again soon, I left, first, however, bidding the gushing Clarissa a fond good-by, pleading with her to keep my ghostly secret, and promising soon to send her a delightful letter of twenty-odd pages, and a gold watch, as a memento of my meeting with such a charming creature as herself.

"And you will remember me?" I sighed.

"Yeou don't care ef I do," she said, coquettishly.

"I'll die of a broken heart if you don't," I replied, fervidly.

"Oh, laws! I don't want yeou ter du that."

"But I will, unless you'll promise."

"Wall, I will."

"Even when other fellows come to take you out?"

"I don't go eout with other fellows," she replied, quickly.

"Though I could hev a dozen ef I wanted 'em."

And she heaved a sigh that really shook the building.

"Oh, Clarie!"

"Charlie!"

"You will remember me?"

"Always!"

"Never forget me?"

"Never!"

"Sure?"

"Sure as I'm alivin'!"

"Say it."

"Say what?"

"Say you'll never forget me."

"I'll never forget yeou."

"Never?"

"Never, never!"

"Clarie, you're a daisy, a buttercup, and a hot-house tea-rose combined," I said. "In the words of my great-grandfather, Rip Van Winkle, 'may you live long and prosper.' And health, wealth, and happiness be your portion. Good-by, farewell, so long, see you later, ta-ta!"

And I vamoosed.

And wretch that I was, I forgot all about her immediately.

But she didn't pine away in consequence.

Nary a pine.

On the contrary, she married a rich commission merchant of Pumpkinville, and is to-day the happy mother of ten grown-up apple blossom farm sprouts.

But the Pumpkinville County Fair is waiting, and I must hurry on.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAKING.

Pumpkinville County and its neighborhood had broken forth in all its glory.

Crowds of country and city people were walking, running, driving, and pushing on to the fair, each determined to get his money's worth in time, if in nothing else.

As I entered the gate I felt a fat hand on my shoulder, and turning, saw Jim, pale as death.

"Hello, Jim! where in the dickens did you go to?" I exclaimed.

"Thank the stars you're alive!" he ejaculated.

"Alive?" I queried; "why shouldn't I be? Where have you been?"

"Wasn't you hung?" he went on.

"Hung? Jim, are you crazy?"

"Now, come off, Match; I know you were caught badly last night. How did you escape?"

"Jim, you've got 'em bad."

"No, I ain't; you've got 'em, Match," he replied, stoutly.

"Now Jim, see here. When I went to sleep last night, you were alongside of me. When I woke up this morning you were gone. Why didn't you stay to breakfast? Were you afraid old Leadow would rake us up about that ghost story?"

Jim's face was a regular Chinese puzzle.

"W-why didn't I s-stay to breakfast?" he faltered.

"Yes."

"D-did you s-stay?"

"Why, Jim, do you suppose I'd go off and leave a fine spread without touching it?"

"W-when did you g-get up?"

"About seven o'clock."

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned.

"What's the matter now?" I asked, sympathetically.

"D-did you see anybody in o-our r-room last night?" he asked, slowly.

"Oh, Jim, I didn't think you believed in ghosts!" I cried.

"I don't believe in 'em."

"Yes, you do; you were afraid of the very ghost you helped produce."

"I ain't afraid of ghosts, but I am of men who want to hang you up in an apple orchard," he groaned.

"I'm sure I don't understand you."

"W-when did you go t-to s-sleep?"

"Why, when I came up with the bed-sheet, Jim; don't ask such simple questions."

"Oh, Lord!"

"Did you see any one, Jim?"

"N-no, I-I guess not," he replied, very slowly.

"And why did you leave?"

"I-I had a bad dream, and wanted to walk it off," he continued, desperately.

And then he switched-off on another subject, and refused to say a single word about the previous night's occurrences.

In a quarter of an hour we had our stand open for business, and then I must say Jim was in his element. The way he raked in the country people was a caution.

He put me on my metal, and I sailed in, determined to outdo him in my sales, or throw my share of our goods away and go out of the business.

"Say, Sally, just look here!" exclaimed a lank youth—a sample customer—as he edged up to our stand, a short girl, with red hair, hanging on his arm.

Sally looked.

"What is it, Peter?" she asked.

"I dunno," he replied.

Neither did I, but I offered the following:

"The genuine Japanese Handkerchief Perfume, ladies—the sweetest and most delicious scent in the world. Manufactured under the directions of the Emperor of Japan, and the only perfume allowed by Queen Victoria in her royal palaces. One drop of it is as strong as an ounce of ordinary cologne, and will last till time shall be no more!"

And as Sally had her handkerchief in her hand, I quickly reached over, secured it, put a few drops from our private bottle on it, and handed it back.

"Oh, Peter, hain't it jest scrumptious!" she cried.

Peter gave it a sniff.

"It is good, but——"

"One bottle be enough?" I asked, wrapping it up, and handing it over to Sally.

"How much is that?" faltered the youth.

"One dollar, please."

"A dollar!" groaned the youth. "An' I only brung tew dollars ter spend all day! Reckon we can't git no'dinner, and sit on the flyin' horses an' hev peanuts an' popcorn, on that."

And with another groan he passed over the dollar and walked sadly away.

"Har-oil? Let's see it," said a way-backer. "Is it as good as grease?"

"Far superior," I replied. "It was first introduced into this country by General Jackson. Know him?"

"Wall, neow, yeow kin jist splutter ef I don't. Darn good, I guess, ef he used it."

"He said it was the only thing fit to put on a man's head," I went on. "Made a statement to that effect in writing, which I now have in my pocket."

"Crickety! Old Andy Jackson's own writin'?"

"Yes, sir, indorsing this hair-oil as the best."

"I'd like ter see——"

"Of course we don't show the recommendation to every one, because handling would wear it out, and to us it is worth more than its weight in gold."

"I reckon it is. But darn my suspenders ef I wouldn't like ter see the old man's hand. I can't read, but——"

"Well, you shall see it," I replied. "I know you will appreciate the privilege."

"So I will."

I got out an old letter and let the way-backer inspect it.

He squinted it over, turned it upside down, looked through it, and then handed it back.

"Much obliged," he said. "It's wuth more'n the hull fair, darn ef it hain't. The old man's writin'—never thunk I'd live ter see it."

"Of course you want a bottle of the oil."

"Wall, I jest guess! Du yeou think I'd go back on him? Why, I'm votin' fer him yit. See here!" He took off his hat. "I

hain't got a derved sprig ov har left, but I'll take a bottle ter put on the kitchen shelf jest ter look at, darn me ef I don't!"

And he planked down his dollar, and walked away with the bottle proudly sticking out of the top outer pocket of his linen duster.

Presently the crowd sifted down, and I left the stand to take a look at the vegetable tent.

As I entered I discovered Mr. Cornelius O'Roorey in heated debate with another agriculture follower.

I immediately slipped on the false mustache, and shoved into the crowd to see what was up.

I soon found out.

My Lightmind's Elective Crop Grower was at the bottom of it. My Early Egg apples were on exhibition, the placard attached, and Mr. O'Roorey, driven nearly crazy trying to explain things, was now trying to convince an old farmer, who declared the whole thing a humbug,

"It's the electricity, sure——" he was saying.

"It's a darn humbug!" roared the old farmer. "Apples in three weeks; strawberries in a couple of days! the idee! Yeou air crazy!"

"I'm no more crazy nor th'ould puddin'-head talkin' ter me!" howled O'Roorey.

"Call me crazy?" shrieked the farmer. "I'll lick the boots orfer yeou!"

"Cum on, thin!" returned O'Roorey, boiling over with rage. "Oi'll allow no mud-digger to thread on the tail ov me coat, so Oi won't!"

And he tapped the old farmer on the tip of his proboscis.

The action was like touching a match to a quantity of gunpowder.

The old man was on his ear in just the sixteenth part of a second,

He made for O'Roorey.

Made for him with both hands, both feet and his head, all at the same time.

Before a policeman could arrive, both of them were wrecks of battered faces, torn clothing, and broken shins.

Such is the effect of advancing civilization upon the uneducated mind.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOOD-BY TO PUMPKINVILLE.

When Jim and I counted up the receipts at the end of the day, we found we had just cleared thirty-six dollars, twenty-six of which I had taken in.

We stopped that night at a hotel just opposite the fair-grounds. I thought there would be small chance for fun there. Doctoring the eating seemed tame, ghosts were played out, so was electricity mesmerism ditto, and, to tell the truth, I had the blues of the worst kind.

"I'll have a racket to-morrow, if I have to blow the bottom out of the fair-grounds to do it!" said I to myself.

At four o'clock in the morning, I stole over to the fair-grounds. A sleepy watchman recognized me as a standholder, and let me in. In the main building, where we were located, the fancy work, and cakes, and preserves were exhibited on one side, and household work and pets on the other.

A watchman was present, but I gave him a quarter for watching our stuff, and he immediately thought it was time he had a drink, and skipped to get it.

Left alone, I did not waste my time.

Premium tags had been fastened on a number of superior articles. Each of these tags I transferred to the worst-looking specimens in its department.

In one corner lay the instruments belonging to the brass band that played on the balcony in front of the building.

Near by was an exhibition of pepper and spices, and in two minutes I had the interiors of those instruments seasoned as they had never been before.

Then I went around to the household pets.

I found a harvest for fun.

Six pet cats in six cages; each cat an especial enemy of the other five cats.

Two cages of white mice.

One cage of trained rats.

All eying the aforesaid cats with suspicion.

I got to thinking.

Suppose, at a given time, all those cages were opened simultaneously, what would happen?

It was a curious question.

I determined to solve it for satisfaction.

Plenty of cords were at hand, and by the time the watchman returned, a contrivance for doing what I wished was complete.

At the proper time Jim put in an appearance.

Presently the gates were opened to the public, and the crowd came in with a rush.

And in five minutes just forty-six quarrels were under full headway,

People who felt sure that they would win prizes found they were left.

Their neighbors' inferior stuff had "taken the cake."

They were mad.

And they didn't hesitate to show it.

"The idee ov a soggy mass of dough bein' called bread!" cried an old maid. "I could bake better stuff nor that when I was five year old."

"An' that was fifty year ago," put in a bystander; and he dove out of sight to escape losing his wool.

"Land sakes! if that committee hain't crazy! Puttin' a premium on sech choc'late cake as that!" cried another.

"That's better cake nor yeou kin make, Melusa Pelkins!"

"Ef I couldn't bake better nor that, I'd never hev cake in my house!"

"Ef some fool hain't put a premium on that rag, an' let this beautiful patch-quilt pass!"

"Oh, the monsters! Here's preserves ain't fit to eat got the prize! Jenny, let's take our pears and quinces home. The committee have been bribed!"

"It's awful!"

"A reg'lar scandal!"

"I'll never cum ter this fair agin!"

"People who don't win prizes allers ses that."

"No sech thing!"

"Where's the committee?"

The hubbub in the main building brought nearly every one on the grounds to the spot.

And the committee came.

Landed in a hornet's nest.

In vain they tried to explain matters.

It was useless.

Those who held prize tickets refused to give them up.

Then those who ought to have them tried to get them by force.

It was a lively skirmish, exclusively for females.

Yet five minutes later every woman's father, husband, or big brother had his oar in it, too.

Then the lively skirmish changed into a deadly battle.

The band-master got an idea he could put the people in better humor by giving them a tune.

So he gave the signal to start.

Gee-whittaker!

Black, red, and cayenne pepper, nutmegs, cinnamon, and other spices flew in all directions, the wind carrying it directly into the building.

And then the biggest sneezing match on record started.

"Ker-chew! Darn it, who—ker-chew! ker-chew!"

"Ker-chew! You mean, miserable lump ov—ker-chew! Oh, ker-chew!"

"Who—ker-chew! threw that pepper at me?—ker-chew!"

Eyes streamed with tears. People wanted to fight and—sneezed; they wanted to jaw and—sneezed; they wanted to kill some body—and only sneezed again.

Then I guessed the proper time had come.

Leaving our stuff and money in Jim's charge, I walked through the crowd to where a bundle of cords ran from the cages.

I pulled that cord.

Phew!

In ten seconds six cats were on the rampage after four or five dozen rats and mice.

And several hundred women were holding their skirts, climbing up on shelves, counters, and tables, and screaming at the top of their voices.

And an equal number of men were hunting for clubs, barrel staves, and bottles with which to knock the life out of the frisky rodents, who were scurrying pell-mell in all directions.

It was a scene never to be forgotten.

Presently I worked my way through the surging mass of frightened, excited, and angry people back to our stand.

To my surprise it was empty!

Neither Jim nor the money and the goods were there.

And on the top of the stand my partner had chalked these words:

"Dere Match—a Fole an' his Munny is Sune parted. Yu hav Play yur last Joak on Singing Jim the Fakir."

I read the note over,

Real nice news, wasn't it?

I put my hand in my pocket.

It contained ten cents.

Exactly double what I had when I met Jim.

"Well, the world is wide," I thought. "I got along before met Jim, and I'll get along now he's gone. It won't be many days before some one else turns up to take his place."

Match is no longer a fakir.

(THE END.)

"THE BOY CHIEF; OR, THE BATTLES OF THE AVENGERS," by Col. Prentiss Ingraham, will be published in the next number (57) of the NUGGET LIBRARY.